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PROFESSIONAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY IN THE FORMATION OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HISPANIC JOURNALISTS

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Dedication

A mis padres, por su apoyo e inspiración.

Somos un equipo.

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Cliched as it may read, I really cannot pass on the opportunity of giving the people who made this dissertation possible their due.

I don't think I'd have enough space in this dissertation to thank Professor Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez enough for her guidance. Through all these years, Dr. Rivas-Rodriguez has been a mentor and role model. Doctora: It has been an honor to contribute to your research projects and to learn from seeing your work as a journalist, scholar and educator. *Gracias*.

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Abstract

PROFESSIONAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY IN THE FORMATION OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HISPANIC JOURNALISTS

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2018

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This dissertation presents the context and antecedents of the formation of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ). The organization, formally established in 1984, was the first pan-ethnic entity with a national reach created to support and represent Latino media professionals across the United States. This research takes a close look at the way in which a critical mass of Latino journalists—many of them the only, or first in their outlet—built on the momentum of civil rights activism to create an entity charged with the mission of promoting the professional development of Latino media professionals.

Building on oral history interviews with early NAHJ leaders and archival sources, this research highlights the direct and indirect connections the organization had with Chicano and other Latino civil rights activism and with academia, as well as the essential support provided by the then-thriving philanthropic arm of media corporations, like the Gannett Foundation. Through the oral testimonials of key players in the creation of NAHJ, this dissertation also provides insights into the role of ethnic and professional identity in media activism by active media workers.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

On August 2014, Latino journalists from across the United States gathered in San Antonio for the annual convention of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ). The city, cradle of Spanish-language media in the United States,[1] was a fitting site for a celebration of the organization's thirtieth anniversary. The conference capped three days of what the usual mix of panels and workshops with a gala to induct the founding members of NAHJ into the organization's Hall of Fame.[2] The event would provide the more than 800 attendees with the opportunity to honor the fifteen media professionals who spent months working to assemble an organization that would fight to boost the presence and permanence of Latinas/os in the field and combat discrimination on and off the pages and screens.

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1. The city's prominent position was the original headquarters of a predecessor to the largest Spanish-language newspaper (*La Prensa*, founded by the Lozano family before moving to Los Angeles and publishing *La Opinión*) and the site where the first Spanish-language radio (KCOR) and television (KWEX) stations were established. See: Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, "Ignacio E. Lozano: The Mexican Exile Publisher who Conquered San Antonio and Los Angeles," *American Journalism* 21, no 1 (2004), 75-89. Melita M. Garza, *They Came to Toil: Newspaper Representations of Mexicans and Immigrants in the Great Depression* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018). Clemencia Rodriguez, *Fissures in the Mediascape: An International Study of Citizens' Media.* (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2001).

2. "NAHJ kicks off annual convention in San Antonio," *Business Wire*, August 7, 2014. Retrieved from: https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20140807005255/en/NAHJ-Kicks-Annual-Convention-San-Antonio.

The event's celebratory tone and predictable parade of awards and applause were abruptly interrupted when Charlie Ericksen, one of the NAHJ founders present at the event, got a hold of the microphone and delivered an impromptu acceptance speech. Ericksen questioned whether there was anything to celebrate, given the decline in the raw number of working US Latino journalists, compared to the previous decade[3] and the large gap between the Latino proportion of the US population and the very small representation in American newsrooms. In a speech that brought the event to a grinding halt, Ericksen said that in that context, the ceremony—and specially the presentation of the NAHJ Media Award to *Fox News Latino*—were "kind of a farce."[4]

The then-outgoing president of NAHJ, Hugo Balta, a former ESPN presenter, took issue with Ericksen's remarks and forcefully distanced himself—and the organization—from them as soon as he had access to a microphone. Balta was particularly critical of Ericksen's singling out of Fox News for criticism.[5] According to coverage of the incident and its aftermath by media journalist Richard Prince, Balta apologized to Francisco Cortés, founder and director of *Fox News Latino*, who

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3. Hispanics' presence in media tracked the declining numbers of all journalists of color, and the contraction of the field in general. "Minorities in newsrooms increase; 63 percent of newspapers have at least one woman among top-three editors," American Society of Newspaper Editors, July 29, 2014. Retrieved from: https://www.asne.org/diversity-survey-2014.

4. Richard Prince, "Fox News Didn't Deserve Award From Hispanic Journalists, Says Group's Co-Founder" *Journal-Isms*, August 11, 2014. Retrieved from:

5. While the speech's emphasis was on the stagnant numbers of Latinos in US media, in a later interview, Ericksen emphasized that the recognition of Fox News was part of his problem with the ceremony and not merely circumstantial.

received the award on behalf of the company. At one point, he said "Fox is the reason why we're here," a remark that Prince attributed to the role of Fox News Channel a sponsor of the event.[6]

Days after the incident, Ericksen and Balta debated the incident in a New York City call-in radio show. The conversation broadened the debate and brought up topics such as funding and credibility, the presentation of awards to corporate entities rather than individual journalists and at some point delved into a discussion of the general state of Latinos in all mainstream media.

Ericksen and Balta presented two markedly different perspectives. Ericksen, by then well into his eighties and retired from journalism, was unapologetic in his criticism of Fox News' coverage of US Latinos and firmly against the prospect of accepting contributions from corporations that could use awards as a proof that their coverage was approved by Latino media professionals. Balta, on the other hand, defended the decision to recognize Francisco Cortés and *Fox News Latino* and emphasized the importance of engaging and having a "dialogue" with the company in case their coverage of the community was inadequate.[7]

The incident and its aftermath provide a representative snapshot of the tensions inherent to the balancing act of fighting to change a field while being a part of it. NAHJ, like its sister organizations founded by LGBT journalists, African

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6. *Fox News Latino* closed in 2016. Prince, "Fox News Didn't Deserve…"

7. "Balta & Ericksen Debate NAHJ's Fox News Latino Award," recording of the Jordan Journal show from WBAI 99.5 uploaded to the *Latino Rebels* YouTube channel. Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7mI2YT_V-SA

Americans, Native Americans and Asian Americans—as well as the coalition of all five into UNITY—is a collection of media professionals who identify as members of an underrepresented group and who are committed toward creating opportunities for other Latinos. Individual efforts can be as modest as being part of the network, or as ambitious as becoming an officer and representing Latino journalists in meetings with media management and ownership.

Why study the origins of NAHJ?

This dissertation represents one of the first attempts to incorporate the work of Latino journalist-activists into the canon of media and journalism history. The only direct antecedent is an article written by Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez for an encyclopedia on US Latinos.[8] Two broader overviews of race and ethnicity in American news media—itself a small, if growing, research area—have also devoted space to the organization's origins and the nature of its work, but only as part of a broader discussion of journalist organizations.[9] The fact that all the above-mentioned pieces that deal with NAHJ have one of its founders or forbearers as authors attest to the lack of attention given to the topic.[10] This is not to say that the

8. Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, "The National Association of Hispanic Journalists"

9. Clint Wilson II, Felix Gutierrez and Lena M. Chao, *Racism, Sexism and the Media*, 3rd edition (London: Sage, 2013). Juan Gonzalez and Joseph Torres, *News for All the People: The Epic Story of Race and the American Media* (New York: Verso, 2011).

10. Rivas-Rodriguez was a member of the founding committee and author of the encyclopedia article; Juan Gonzalez was also a founder of NAHJ and Felix Gutierrez was executive director of the California Chicano News Media Association (CCNMA), a regional precursor to NAHJ

history of collective actions by journalists to change journalism itself in general has received significant attention.[11]

After three decades of building a national network of professionals, contentious episodes and overcoming a major economic downturn that almost shut down the organization's run, NAHJ has come a long way. But foundational issues like the ones brought up in the controversy involving Charlie Ericksen and Hugo Balta date back to the start of the organization. Important decisions related to the identity of the organization and the allocation of internal power went on to shape its growth and performance. In many cases, these decisions were influenced by the peculiarities of *Latinidad* in the United States. For example, there was some discussion of how to define the inclusion of Spanish-language journalists and Puerto Rico-based journalists in the organization, given that the group was fundamentally conceived as a platform for professionals who found themselves in the minority at mainstream media newsrooms. Cultural and ideological traits of the journalistic field, like the pressure to convey adherence to the tenets of objectivity and balance or the need to be close to the centers of power—and far from the centers of US Latino culture—turned out to be decisive in setting boundaries to what the organization could do or claim in pursuit of its interests.

In the current scenario of economic turmoil and uncertainty for journalism and journalists, the efforts to incorporate more women and people of color into

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11. Some literature tangentially connected to this project, and to the history of journalist organizations in general, are covered in Chapter 2.

media and other cultural industries in the 1960s and 1970s and the expectation to achieve parity with the demographics of the US can seem quaint or in the most pessimistic views, unrealistic.

The years when all-powerful news media corporations had a firm grip on the eyes and minds of audiences across the US have now been over for decades, after all,[12] and while the consolidation of media into a handful of conglomerates has not stopped since the massive deregulatory push from the 1980s, the news media and its workers face a perpetual crisis that makes the allocation of resources to diversity initiatives almost unthinkable. As dailies fold or contract their personnel across the United States, the insistence on representation might not seem worthy of attention, much less action, to management. After all, it was already tried before and the numbers are not any closer to demographic parity.[13]

And yet, the issue of representation continues to be highly charged, highly visible in professional and academic circles,[14] and a matter of difficult, sometimes painful conversations that reveal a long history of exclusion and sometimes, of

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12. Steven H. Chaffee and Miriam J. Metzger, "The end of mass communication?" *Mass Communication & Society* 4, no. 4 (2001), 365-379.

13. And it is indeed an unacceptable premise to some, judging by some of the results from research conducted in the last two decades. See Cristina Bodinger-De Uriarte and Gunnar Valgeirsson, "Institutional disconnects as obstacles to diversity in journalism in the United States," *Journalism Practice* 9, no 3 (2015), 399-417. Mercedes Lynn De Uriarte, Cristina Bodinder De Uriarte and José Luis Benavides, *Diversity disconnects: From Classroom to Newsroom* (Washington, DC: Ford Foundation, 2003).

14. Diversity (or the lack thereof) has been attributed everything from the erasure of voters of color in the coverage of the 2016 presidential election to the framing of immigration.

abuse. The protagonists of these debates are in part the youngest entrants into the field; the incoming cohorts of media producers and news consumers that are the most demographically diverse in the history of the United States. Their engagement with public life and governance is crucial for the health of democracy.[15]

Thirty Years Later

Part of the inspiration for this dissertation comes from a perception, or feeling, if you may, that the discourse on "diversity" and "inclusion" in American media has remained in stasis for decades as generations of reporters, editors and executives move in and out of the field without noticeable changes in how things are done.

On one hand, the perception that the relative lack of success in bringing a larger proportion of journalists of color into general-market newsrooms is the product of systematic issues that have not been properly documented, and where there has been little accountability.

Structure of the manuscript

The following chapters develop the antecedents and intellectual framework that undergirds my research of the origins of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists.

- Chapter 2 presents a broad overview of relevant literature, placing this project among other historical studies of media sociology, in this case at the intersection of media activism and ethnic/race history.

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15. Paula M. Poindexter, *Millennials, News, and Social Media: Is News Engagement a Thing of the Past?* (New York: Peter Lang, 2012).

- Chapter 3 describes the methodological design and foundations of this project, with an emphasis on the collection and processing of the primary sources—oral histories of early NAHJ leaders.
- Chapter 4 looks at several antecedents of the creation of organizations of journalists of color, including a broad history of US Latinos/as and of minorities in mainstream newsrooms, as well as an overview of some of the first diversity initiatives.
- Chapter 5 introduces the California Chicano News Media Association (CCNMA), an organization founded by Mexican American journalists in Los Angeles in 1972 to create a professional community and increase the numbers of Chicana/o (and later Latino/a) media workers in mainstream media. As an early exemplar of the possibilities for an organization of this type, CCNMA went on to provide some of the intellectual foundations of NAHJ.
- Chapter 6 focuses on the process that led to the creation of NAHJ in the period from the 1982 National Hispanic Media Conference—the first event that brought together Latino journalists from across the Untied States—to the incorporation of NAHJ in the spring of 1984.
- Chapter 7 closes the dissertation with general conclusions and reflections from the interviewees on their experience as early NAHJ/CCNMA leaders and perspectives on the performance of the organization in its first 34 years.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Theoretical Foundation

This work is primarily a case study of how the turbulence of the civil rights years rippled through the journalistic field during and following the height of protest and organizing activity by members of racialized minority groups, including Mexican Americans and other Latinas/os. What sets this project apart is that the focus is not directly on news content or on the process through which news is gathered and presented,[16] but on actions pursued by individuals who were immersed in the journalistic field to change its composition, in a sustained campaign or through a series of campaigns that have been variedly referred to as the "desegregation" or "integration" of newsrooms,[17] the "movement" for diversity and for "media justice," depending on the perspective of the author, and in the case of scholarly works, on the theoretical framework undergirding the study.

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16. As a later section of this chapter and chapter 4 will show, many journalists active during the most heated years of civil rights organizing in the United States claim to have changed their perspective on race and journalism, if not their work routines altogether, after this era had passed.

17. Alice Bonner, *Changing the Color of the News: Robert Maynard and the Desegregation of Daily Newspapers*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (1999).

This chapter looks at the existing literature that directly precedes this study—small as this corpus is at the time of this writing. The relative novelty of the research and its unorthodox position at the intersection of ethnic and media history requires a broader look at the existing literature. Instead of presenting a chronological review of histories of journalism and of Latinos/as in the media, I focus first on where this type of study of activism falls in the broader historiography of change in journalism. Following recent reflection by journalism historians on the mixed record of journalism history with regard to constructing a coherent literature, I focus on identifying some of the intellectual predecessors of this work, which go from the study of journalists' organizing efforts to the research on media activism. These works themselves build on a variety of theoretical frameworks, from social movement theory to the meso-level theories of social action as applied to media studies by scholars such as Rodney Benson or Bartholomew Sparrow. This overview is followed by the brief presentation of two key sociological and anthropological concepts that have been implemented in studies of the emergence of Latina/o identity in the second half of the 20th century. These concepts are pan-ethnicity (pan-Latinidad) and *conciencia* or "consciousness."

Tracking Change in the Journalistic Field

The role of theory and the appropriateness of emulating the methods and analytical strategies of the social sciences have been among the most contested

issues in historiography.[18] The more specialized field of journalism history has not been left untouched by the major debates that engulfed professional history, although some of the shocks and "turns" of the broader field have been delayed or muted by virtue of journalism historians' relative isolation in mass communication departments.

As John Nerone argues in his 1993 essay on the intellectual genealogy of US journalism history, the field remained siloed from some major departures in historical thought, and the notion of there being a "grand narrative" of journalism that could be cobbled out of the works of individual historians continued to circulate in the discipline's circles long after it had been discarded by professional historians.[19] Still, while many of the early accounts did not consciously adhere to any particular theoretical framework in its interpretation, journalism writings focused on historiography and method have identified (and critiqued) some recurrent patterns of how change is explained and represented in writing.

In their now classic methodological volume, David Startt and William Sloan recap the literature up to the 1980s and classify works in a handful of broad categories. These include the once dominant "Whig," "progressive" narrative of American journalism history[20] and the critical studies that arose in later decades.

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18. John Nerone. "Theory and History," in *The American Journalism Reader*, eds. Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt (New York: Routledge, 2011), 36. The search for an ideal approach to theory and the position vis-à-vis the rest of the humanities and social sciences are among the defining traits of most eras/movements in history, including the Whig and Progressive movements, the *Annales* School and the "cultural" or "linguistic" turns of the mid-to-late 20th century.

19. Ibid 41.

The latter, which include the work of scholars like Robert McChesney and Todd Gitlin, has provided part of the intellectual foundation to contemporary studies of media activism and of the role of power in shaping news contents.[21]

Moving away from "Whig" history

In the long tradition of US journalism history, which predates the modern mass communication in which it is now embedded into, the first entries started out as a mosaic of isolated biographies and institutional histories.[22] The first histories of American news-making presented few connections between the dispersed accounts of regional newspapers and the life stories of individual writers and publishers, and with few exceptions the chroniclers of these media outlets did not devote space to analyzing the environment that led to the creation and demise of these enterprises.[23]

The view of the rise of American journalism would remain fragmented for another century.[24] As US media grew and evolved into a commercial system with

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20. James D. Startt and William David Sloan, *Historical Methods in Mass Communication* (New York, Routledge, 1989).

21. Robert W. McChesney, *Telecommunications, Mass Media, and Democracy: The Battle for the Control of US Broadcasting, 1928-1935* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.) Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003.)

22. Isaiah Thomas, *The History of Printing in America* [Reprint], (New York: Weathervane Books, 1970).

23. John D. Stevens and Hazel Dicken Garcia, *Communication History* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1980).

24. Ibid. Stevens and Dicken Garcia present a detailed chronology of the first histories of American journalism and their approach to how the field emerged from the colonial era to the mid-20th century. See also Kevin G. Barnhurst and John

national coverage and a recognizable set of professional norms and expectations, a narrative of progress—later known post-hoc as "Whig" history of journalism—became dominant. This perspective on journalism, influenced by the Progressive-era views of the role of the press for democracy traces a linear, triumphal history, from colonial papers and the partisan press of the early years of the Union and on to the rise of the modern "mainstream" objective newspaper.[25] In its emphasis on individual accomplishment and its celebratory tone, this paradigm would be akin to what social theorists have criticized as an overemphasis on agency.

The writings tend to look at the development of the field in a vacuum, with little attention to how political, economic and social context shaped the rise and fall of media empires. The press was assumed to have become autonomous and self-regulating as the corollary of a century-plus of development led by "Great Men" like Benjamin Franklin, Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst. Needless to say, the exclusion and limited coverage of women, African Americans, Latinos and other marginalized identities are barely acknowledged, especially in their original editions.[26] This body of literature, in general, tends to understand journalism and

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Nerone, "Journalism History," in eds. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzch, *Handbook of Journalism Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 19.

25. Nord, "The Practice of Journalism History."

26. The most popular histories written during the first half of the 20th century did acknowledge some African American, Latinx and women journalists and news outlets, but usually as vignettes of "firsts" and exemptions to the rule, or as part of a separate media system—the Spanish-language and Black presses. Those that saw subsequent re-editions, such as the classic histories by Mott and Emery & Emery, used as textbooks in many journalism schools, have more mentions of Latinx media in later editions.

its byproducts as unproblematic products, rather than *processes*. The field and its norms, values and practices were seen as natural and uncontested—the destination of years of evolution towards professionalism and its associated traits.

Contemporary currents: Cultural history and institutional approaches

The search for alternative interpretations in journalism history gained steam in the latter part of the 20th century. While the efforts to re-launch the field have ebbed and flowed, there are a few key events that have could be said to have been decisive in the evolution of this type of research. In 1974, communication theorist James Carey penned a pioneering essay that provide a major departure point for historical studies of the news. In his classic piece "The Practice of Journalism History," Carey deplored what he termed an embarrassing state of journalism history, rendered impotent by its heavy reliance on "Whig" narratives of news making.[27] The theorist called on historians to re-orient their efforts to researching what he termed a cultural history of journalism, a perspective inclusive and reflective of what he identified as the "ritual" view of communication in another seminal essay.

Carey's ritual view of communication is positioned as alternative, but complementary, to the transmission model, which at the time of the original publication of the essay (1975) was already identified as the dominant paradigm in communication studies. The ritual model of communication focused on the

27. Carey, "The Problem of Journalism History," 3.

fostering of community through the construction of shared meaning, rather than on the linear exchange of information. Says Carey:

> "It [the ritual view of communication] sees the original or highest manifestation of communication not in the transmission of intelligent information but in the construction and maintenance of an ordered, meaningful cultural world that can serve as a control and container for human action."[28]

In his seminal work, Carey invited historians to focus on journalism not merely as a vehicle for the delivery of information to a mass audience, but as a means for society to capture and reconstitute the complexity of social life. Under that purview, the evolution of certain practices and techniques that go into producing media contents, from the assignment of beats to the nut graf, as well as the experiences of news workers, can be historicized and subjected to the same type of analysis that other forms of expression had already been subjected to.[29] This perspective went on to inform an entire branch of journalism studies, commonly grouped in mapping the field as the "cultural analysis" of journalism.[30]

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28. James Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication," in ed. James Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2009), 5.

29. Carey, "The Problem of Journalism History," 4. Some authors, such as Thomas Schmidt, have noted that Carey maintained some distance from the British Cultural Studies tradition, as he found it to be overly focused on ideology and a Marxist perspective on cultural production. "The Problem of Journalism History" is one of the few exceptions; Carey cites Raymond Williams in calling for the capturing of the entire "structure of feeling"—or consciousness—rather than just cognitions. See Thomas R. Schmidt, "The circuit of culture: A model for journalism history," *CM: Communication and Media* XI, no. 36 (2016), 78.

30. For example, see: Barbie Zelizer, "Journalism and the Academy," in eds. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzch, *Handbook of Journalism Studies* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 37.

Carey's call for change remains a major milestone of histories of the discipline, not only for inspiring a (somewhat belated) movement toward a more critical, theory-infused communication history, but also as an early indicator of the broader journalism field's own turn to postmodern and critical perspectives and to a more anthropological approaches to the study of media production and reception. In this line of work, journalism historians focus on how the contemporary "conventional wisdom" of American newsmaking research, including received norms like objectivity and balance, is a product of contingent social forces. These works in a way represent the journalism studies equivalent of the turn to social and cultural histories in the mid-to-late 20th century.[31]

But the transition to a cultural understanding of the history of news media has been anything but seamless. Carey's use of broad terms like "consciousness" and what has been criticized as a naive—if not reactionary—assumption that rituals and community are constructive and inclusive of difference has resulted in criticism[32] as well as, ironically, a litany of proposals to translate his approach into discrete, measurable operational terms.[33]

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31. Recent examples of this type of work include: John Nerone and Kevin G. Barnhurst, "US newspaper types, the newsroom, and the division of labor, 1750–2000," *Journalism Studies* 4, no. 4 (2004), 435-449 Will Mari, "An Enduring Ethos: Journalism Textbooks and Public Service," *Journalism Practice* 9, no. 5 (2015), 687-703. Will Mari, "'Bright and Inviolate': Editorial–Business Divides in Early Twentieth-Century Journalism Textbooks," *American Journalism* 31, no. 3 (2014), 378-399.

32. David Paul Nord, "A Plea for Journalism History," *Journalism History* 15, no. 1 (1988), 10.

Journalism or journalist history?

In the decades since the original publication of Carey's landmark essay, the resurgence of theory as a subject of debate in journalism history has brought culture to the forefront of scholarly debates on the future of the field. Researchers have proposed various ways to bring the notions of "culture" and "consciousness" into the ongoing study of journalism history. In some cases, the prescribed path concepts and analytical models from cultural analysis and applies them to the development of stylistic devices or components of news work.[34] Proposed paths to apprehend these diffuse concepts have gone from the execution of longitudinal content analyses spanning hundreds of years, to a renewed institutionalism—an approach that has been adopted for this project, and which will be detailed in a future section.[35]

In other works, Carey's seminal essay is revisited in the search for clues on how to operationalize his theoretical proposals. In a collaborative essay that featured a variety of approaches to incorporating more theory in journalism history, Amber Roessner posited a path that was both clarifying and faithful to Carey's work. In her piece, she claims that the key to "doing" cultural history might be

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33. David Paul Nord, "James Carey and Journalism History, A Remembrance," *Journalism History* 32, no. 3 (2006). Shortly after the publication of Carey's call for a cultural history of journalism, several communication researchers tried to formulate ways to investigate the "consciousness" of the past empirically, including the use of longitudinal content analysis.

34. Schmidt, "The Circuit of Culture."

35. Nord, "A Plea for Journalism History."

found in the theories of culture, power and expression developed by Raymond Williams, one of the very few authors cited by Carey in his classic essay.[36] She focuses on William's popular concept of structure of feeling,[37] which in its simplest definition can be referred to as the holistic understanding of history and change through the observation of "individual practices as part of an entire system of relations."[38] While the influence of William's work is most often tied to the emergence of British Cultural Studies, Roessner and other students of journalism history have noted that this all-encompassing view of news work could provide a guide for the study of processes that involve identity, interaction and the dissemination of certain modes of expression.

Operationally, Roessner writes in the 2013 essay, this would look like an "archeology" of news work that would transcend the analysis of published output to emphasize the recovery of evidence of the processes that shaped contemporary journalistic values, routines and technologies.[39] In practice, the notions of consciousness and structure of feeling have been employed in a variety of ways. Some authors focus on unearthing the emergence of certain genres or styles of doing journalism, tracking the way in which social structures, political economy or

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36. Amber Roessner, Rick Popp, Brian Creech and Fred Blevens, "'A Measure of Theory?': Considering the Role of Theory in Media History." *American Journalism* 30, no. 2 (2013), 260-278.

37. Raymond Williams, *Marxismo y Literatura*, trad. Pablo di Masso (Barcelona: Península, 2000).

38. Roessner et al., "'A Measure of Theory?'," 263.

39. Ibid.

cultural influences have shaped the adoption of certain technologies and the evolution of particular styles and genres.[40] Others, more in line with the goals of this dissertation, have zeroed in on the lived experiences of news workers, looking at how their membership in a field with porous borders and a work output that is highly visible and subject to scrutiny, understand their field and their position in it.[41] These works add to the growing scholarly interest on the inner lives of journalists and the role of affect in journalism.[42]

This close look at the experiences of the idea of "consciousness" takes a different connotation. From the classic work of W.E.B. DuBois and the "double consciousness" to more recent Chicano and Latino studies scholarship that builds on the idea of borders and *borderlands* as a state of being for individuals with fragmented identities, scholars have long reflected on how members of racialized groups working in spaces where they are in the minority have to carry the burden of having to represent their entire ethnic group while facing unconscious biases and prejudice.[43] An oral history research project, this dissertation is focused on recording not only the historical facts that surrounded the creation of NAHJ, but it

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40. Schmidt, "Rediscovering Narrative."

41. Oren Meyers and Roei Davidson, "The Journalistic Structure of Feeling: An Exploration of Career Life Histories of Israeli Journalists," *Journalism* 15, no. 8 (2014). The concept of "structure of feeling" has been used by authors like Meyers and Davidson in their life histories of Israeli journalists. Bonnie Brennen. "Sweat, Not Melodrama: Reading the Structure of Feeling in All the President's Men," *Journalism* 4, no. 1 (2003), 113-131.

42. Karin Wahl-Jorgensen, "Challenging Presentism in Journalism Studies: An Emotional Life History Approach to Understanding the Lived Experience of Journalists," *Journalism*, advance online publication (2018).

also attempts to capture the experiences and the motivations of those involved, an approximation to the zeitgeist. The interviews allow me to capture these journalist-cum-activists' structure of feeling of the contradiction many of the informants interviewed lived through, being at once pioneers in an exclusionary field while at the same time members of stigmatized and underrepresented ethnic groups. By taking informants' subjectivity into consideration, the research aims to take the history of the field beyond individual narratives of struggle and achievement that have characterized past works.

Journalism as an Institution and an Impetus for Change

Moving away from the "Whig" interpretation of journalism history calls for a wider view of the events under study that includes not only a description of how events panned out, but also an analysis of how institutional configurations and structural inequities have facilitated or constrained change within the field. This has been a concern for several decades, as a look at the journalism historiography literature attests. The landmark book on communication history by John Stevens and Hazel Dicken Garcia, for example, devotes its first section to exploring strategies to overcome the slump that trapped the field into a series of narratives of evolution and progress. Their suggested ways out of this rut, as in other contemporary works, was a closer look at culture and the history of norms and what is assumed to be conventional wisdom.[44] This debate has continued into the 21st century, as media scholars from a variety of approaches have worked to build

44. John D. Stevens and Hazel Dicken Garcia, *Communication History* (London: Sage, 1983).

on theory from sociology[45] and political science[46] to try to explain continuity and change in how news are reported and distributed.

This particular research is focused on an organization created with the mission of boosting the status of an underrepresented group in newsrooms of different types, located all over the country. In addressing such a wide range of stakeholders, the study of the emergence and performance of NAHJ and similar organizations falls under the institutionalist approach to media sociology and media history. In the hierarchy of influences heuristic in widespread use among students of media sociology,[47] this would be equivalent to the meso-level, extra- or inter-organizational level of influences on news content.

At its most broad, these perspectives of media and journalism portray the field as a mostly homogeneous, coherent social institution with coherent norms for "adequate behavior and a repertoire of "scripts, categories and models" that are employed by individual actors in navigating everyday life and work.[48] While different institutional approaches to the study of politics and other realms of public

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45. Tim P. Vos, "Explaining the origins of the advertising agency," *American Journalism* 30, no. 4 (2013), 450-472. Vos called for a more careful argumentation of the mechanisms behind the evolution of mass media and its ancillary institutions. Using the case of advertising agencies, Vos cautioned against overstating the influence of individual agency, of material conditions and of ideational/cultural factors in isolation as determinant to changes in mass communication.

46. Sara Bannerman and Blayne Haggart, "Historical Institutionalism in Communication Studies," *Communication Theory* 25, no. 1 (2014), p. 1-22.

47. Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese., *Mediating the message in the 21st Century: A Media Sociology Perspective*. (New York: Routledge, 2013).

48. Peter Hall and Rosemary Taylor, "Political Science and the New Institutionalism," *Political Studies* 44 (1996), 948.

life have been in currency in the social sciences for many decades, their employment in mass communication studies is associated to certain landmark works published at the turn of the 21st century. These include the work of Bartholomew Sparrow and John Cook, who published influential books on the interplay between American journalism and US political institutions.[49] Another meso-level theoretical framework used in journalism studies is Bourdieusian field theory, as developed primarily by Rodney Benson in his comparative studies of how American and French journalism have covered immigration.[50]

More recently, sociologists Neil Fligstein and Robert McAdam developed further the institutional approaches to the study of social life, including Bourdieu's notion of field—which they critiqued as too constraining with regard to individual agency—and proposed an expanded theory of social action fields.[51] This approach largely follows the notion of fields as discrete spaces for social action. Fields are populated by incumbent (established, norm-setting) and challenger (subordinated, but emerging) actors, in an ongoing struggle to either maintain stability or to change the configuration of the field. In contrast to institutional perspectives that

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49. Bartholomew H. Sparrow, *Uncertain Guardians: The news media as a Political Institution* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.) Timothy E. Cook, *Governing with the News: The News Media as a Political Institution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

50. Rodney Benson and Erik Neveu, eds.. *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field*. (New York: Polity, 2005.) Rodney Benson, *Shaping Immigration News*. (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

51. Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*. (Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press, 2012.)

set rigid boundaries to what fields are or are not, Fligstein and McAdam's approach defines social action fields by their "content." For example, universities and colleges in the United States compete in the field of higher education, but also join together to defend common interests when dealing with other major players, like the state. Finally, Social action fields have their own internal logics and their rules for engagement, as well as internal regulatory systems that help provide legitimacy and arbitration to contentious issues.

Building on past work that uses meso-level theories of journalism-as-field and journalism-as-institution to explain stability and change in the profession,[52] this project looks at media workers as actors in a social action field with its own internal logic and norms ("journalistic culture"); a set of dominant (incumbent) and emerging actors who strive to define these norms, with the former trying to maintain the status quo and the latter trying to become incumbents, and internal regulating units that allocate symbolic capital or prestige.

Organizing for change

One particularly neglected area, which has gone virtually unstudied even by scholars of media activism is that which deals with journalists and other media workers as social actors with the agency to negotiate other identities beyond that associated to their profession. That is, research on how some journalists have actively worked to reshape the practices and the prevailing culture within their

52. To establish the theoretical framework of this dissertation, I draw from multiple sources that work under an institutional perspective of national news media ecosystems.

organizations; or of journalists who have organized around a particular identity to reshape the entirety of journalism as an institution or field.

This gap in the literature could be a product of several reasons. On one hand, the traditional, normative notion of journalism and journalistic work would find attempts to change professional norms too deviant to entertain seriously.[53] From the critical side, the idea of professionals changing a system without a major change to commercial media systems would seem superficial or merely cosmetic.[54] The third caveat pertains to methodology: detailed data on the lives and experiences of journalists beyond their published works are hard to obtain. The study of how journalists have organized to achieve collective goals would necessarily go beyond their work routines and output. This would include works that look at that actions that might be performed outside of working hours—and would not be observable in a "general" newsroom ethnography or captured by analyzing stories or commentary from op-eds or social media posts.

This is not to say there is no research on journalists from underrepresented communities. There are indeed pieces on the experiences of journalists as workers, women, and as professionals of underrepresented groups.[55] But this literature has

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53. Robert Hackett. "Journalism of Peace," *Peace Studies* (2009).

54. For an example of this type of critique, see Rodney Benson, "American journalism and the politics of diversity," *Media, Culture & Society* 27, no. 1 (2005), 5-20. The theories of media that position news practices as captured by capital would certainly dismiss any efforts to diversify newsrooms as a cosmetic at best, and at worst, an appropriation of the moral imperative for reparative justice for commercial ends.

55. It is notable that several of these examples are among the few published works on journalism history that center oral sources—even if not all these works are

tended to be fragmentary, with minimal, if any follow-up to one-off studies of how journalists of color recount their experiences and express their attitudes about their situation in American newsrooms or case studies of how newsrooms deal with diversity, if at all. Many such writings are "gray literature"—reports and other publications produced by non-profits and think tanks.

An even smaller niche in the literature addresses journalist-activism and journalist organizations. These include the constituting of interest groups comprised of journalists attempting to elevate their position or defend their autonomy vis-à-vis other social actors, like the corporations or the government. as well as attempts by women, African American and other underrepresented groups who have attempted to change the demographic composition of media organizations or challenge practices perceived to be damaging to their communities. When applied to news, the latter would represent an extension of the "media justice" sub-category identified by Philip Napoli in his review of media activism and social movements.

These works, mostly historical in perspective, with a few contemporary examples that employ ethnographic methods, have looked at the way in which journalists (and sometimes other categories of workers) have joined forces to

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explicitly built on oral history. These include Bonnie Brennen, "Toward a History of Labor and News Work," *The Journal of American History* 83, no. 2 (1996), 572. Carolyn M. Byerly and Catherine A. Warren, "At the margins of center: Organized protest in the newsroom," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 13, no 1 (1996) p. 1-23. Holly Slay and Delmonize Smith, "Professional identity construction: Using narrative to understand the negotiation of professional and stigmatized cultural identities," *Human Relations* 64, no. 1 (2011), 85-107.

defend their autonomy against attempts by the state or other entities to intervene their work.[56] Some of these works have taken an implicit social movement perspective by focusing on strategy and resources, as well as on the construction of coalitions across ethnic lines or international borders. Exemplars of this approach include research on the establishment of transnational connections among journalists and with other stakeholders (human rights groups, etc.) as well as attempts to create regional and global networks of media workers.[57] Other works within the journalism history umbrella have focused in a specific aspect of organizing (e.g. the framing of contentious issues; their foundational identity) by analyzing the content of their communications and ephemera.[58]

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56. Jeannine Relly and Celeste González de Bustamante, "Global and Domestic Networks Advancing Prospects for Institutional and Social Change: The Collective Action Response to Violence Against Journalists," *Journalism & Communication Monographs* 19, no. 2 (2017), 84-152.

57. Kaarle Nordenstreng, Ulf Jonas Björk, Frank Beyersdorf, Svennik Høyer and Epp Lauk, *A History of the International Movement of Journalists: Professionalism Versus Politics* (Basingstoke, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

58. For a recent example, see: Candi S. Carter Olson, "'We Are the Women of Utah'": The Utah Woman's Press Club's Framing Strategies in the Woman's Exponent." *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly,* 95, no. 1 (2018), 213-234.

Chapter 3

Notes on Methodology

This chapter provides a description of the process I followed to research, organize and compose this history of the antecedents and early years of NAHJ, as told through the experience of its founders and early leaders. The first part presents a broad description of how documentary and oral history sources can and should be incorporated to write a cultural history of media and journalism and explains my rationale for certain key decisions. The second part of the chapter provides a chronology of more than a year of fieldwork and discusses some contextual aspects—including a reflection on my position as a subject vis-à-vis my informants and the broader object of study. As with other projects of an inductive and historical nature, it is important to note that all this reconstruction of "historical facts" is bound by time, place and a particular cultural setting, and shaped by my own identity as a researcher.[59]

No narrative of methodology really does justice to the organized chaos and the serendipity of many history research projects, especially when starting out with a high level of uncertainty about the availability of documentary sources, as was the

59. Bonne Brennen and Hanno Hardt. "Introduction," in *The American Journalism Reader*, eds. Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt (New York: Routledge, 2011), 7.

case for this dissertation. I hope that the following narrative is a faithful rendition of the complexity of conducting qualitative, historical scholarship in writing—especially since many writings tend to downplay or omit all the dead ends and unforeseen complications that accompany the process of discovery.[60] Coming into this specialized field from the social scientific, post-positivist background in journalism research, the relatively freeform nature of much humanistic scholarship caused me to experience something of a culture shock. For the purposes of this chapter, having to separate oneself from the research can be challenging.[61]

As an exercise in transparency and reflexivity, writing a thorough description of the process that led to the narrative is of great value, especially for the fledging scholar. In the interest of making this section of the dissertation as informative as possible, I have divided this disclosure of method in three separate sections: the first two describe and explain what I did to collect and process the facts I gathered from my sources (historical methods), and the logic behind my organizing of the

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60. Many texts on historical methods devote relatively little space to describing methods—beyond the selection of sources—and even fewer stop to discuss the many dead ends inherent to the process. This can make the process more difficult to access for scholars from a social scientific background in their initial attempts to cross over into historical analysis. For a discussion of these and other issues with the "transition" between quantitative and qualitative methods, see: W. James Potter. *An Analysis of Thinking and Research about Qualitative Methods*. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996).

61. A very significant portion of the literature on historiography deals with the constructed nature of what is considered to be "historical fact," and how events and the evidence that leads historians to them get interpreted and re-interpreted until they become one and the same to the reader. Notable examples of classic essays on the topic include: Carl L. Becker, "What Are Historical Facts?," *The Western Political Quarterly* 8, no. 3 (1955), 327. Edward H. Carr, *¿Qué es la historia?* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2003).

data and its presentation (historical analysis and composition). This includes a description of the method behind oral history interviewing. The final segment of this chapter is devoted to a narrative of the actual process—a brief timeline of the moments of discovery, the dead-ends I encountered along the way and how my own identity and position played a role in how the end product turned out.

Sources

Once the research questions have been defined, the first act of hands-on fieldwork in research of a historical nature, is to locate and process the sources that provide evidence of the people and events being analyzed. Sources for historical scholarship are traditionally classified as either primary or secondary, depending on their date of creation, the information presented, the identity of the author(s)—as well as on their relationship to the historian's own research goals.[62] Primary sources, the backbone of historical research, provide *contemporary* and/or *unfiltered* facts and interpretations of the subject at hand, and reflect the voices of individuals and groups who were directly involved in the events.[63] Secondary sources present information that has already been collected and processed by a

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62. James D. Startt and W. David Sloan, *Historical Methods in Mass Communication* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1989), 114. Donald Godfrey, "Researching Electronic Media History," in *Methods of Historical Analysis in Electronic Media*, ed. Donald Godfrey (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 2005). Jeffery A. Smith, "Writing Media History Articles: Manuscript Standards and Scholarly Objectives", *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 92, no. 1 (2015), 12-34.

63. In the case of this dissertation, for example, secondary sources include the past histories on American journalism, and other works that deal with race, ethnicity, and specifically, the role of US Latinxs in the field. These are cited and discussed in the literature review chapter.

third party and are thus farther removed from the events, sometimes by time and distance, but also by coming from a different perspective. Secondary sources reflect the voices—and the biases—of their authors, who have already synthesized and composed the facts under a particular interpretation, and who might not share the same logic and goals than that of the research at hand.

As journalism history developed as a coherent field of study, the nature and diversity of sources used in reconstructing the development of news media have been as varied as the foci of the literature and the scope of each study. Previous efforts to systematically organize and critique historical studies of media—most notably the work of Startt and Sloan, and of Stevens and Dicken Garcia—identify a series of master narratives, like Whig history, as well as the field's equivalents of major foci in history—social and cultural histories of news, political economy and the like.[64] These works are then associated with a particular research process, as each relies primarily on certain types of sources and analytical approaches.

Cultural works that try to get at the emergence of certain news genres—the "news as industrial art" advocated by James Carey—and historical trends in representation put media content at the center of the analysis and analyze the changing trends in how certain groups or issues have been covered in US news through the studied publications' own history and context.[65] In other cases, social

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64. Startt and Sloan, *Historical Methods in Mass Communication*; Stevens and Dicken Garcia, *Communication History*.

65. Among these works I can locate the following examples: For studies of the evolving representations of particular groups or issues, Melita M. Garza, *They Came to Toil*; for histories of journalistic genres or styles, Melita M. Garza, "Framing Mexicans in Great Depression Editorials: Alien Riff-Raff to Heroes," *American*

histories of news have used the content of trade publications and other repositories of "journalistic metadiscourse" to reconstruct shifts in how members of the mainstream media construct their professional identities,[66] analyze the evolution of the values and norms that bind the practice of reporting,[67] or to get at the material conditions in which news work has been conducted.[68] Other research of a sociological, historical bent is usually integrated into the methodology of larger studies that focus on institutional change. These are not usually associated with the journalism history canon, in spite of their heavy emphasis on the contingencies that led to particular field configurations.[69]

Journalism 34, no. 1 (2017), 16-48. Thomas R. Schmidt, "Rediscovering Narrative: A Cultural History of Journalistic Storytelling in American Newspapers, 1969-2001." Ph.D. Diss., University of Oregon, 2017.

66. Bonnie Brennen. "Sweat, Not Melodrama: Reading the Structure of Feeling in All the President's Men," *Journalism* 4, no. 1 (2003), 113-131.

67. John Nerone and Kevin G. Barnhurst, "US newspaper types, the newsroom, and the division of labor, 1750–2000," *Journalism Studies* 4, no. 4 (2004), 435-449 Will Mari, "An Enduring Ethos: Journalism Textbooks and Public Service," *Journalism Practice* 9, no. 5 (2015), 687-703. Will Mari, "'Bright and Inviolate': Editorial–Business Divides in Early Twentieth-Century Journalism Textbooks," *American Journalism* 31, no. 3 (2014), 378-399.

68. Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt have been one of the most prominent proponents of shifting the attention of journalism history (and journalism studies in general) to material analyses of news production. Bonnie Brennen, "Toward a History of Labor and News Work," *The Journal of American History* 83, no. 2 (1996), 572.

69. Rodney Benson, *Shaping Immigration News* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Rodney Benson and Eric Neveu, *Pierre Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field*.

Detailed examinations of the processes that indirectly affect the production of news remain relatively rare in the literature. This type of research presents a different challenge to media historians, given the paucity of suitable archival materials. In the media studies literature, the closest analogs to the current dissertation are past studies of media activism, even when they are not necessarily focused on journalism.

As shown in the chronology of the literature on media activism assembled by Philip Napoli, early studies of this type focused on policymaking and legal conflicts, and the primary sources in these pieces were heavily composed of legal and other government documents (including court cases, policy papers and proceedings).[70] Over the years, the advent and spread of social movement theory from sociology to media studies opened the door to a wider variety of sources, and researchers have assessed trade publications and event proceedings[71]

In the smaller body of work focused on journalists' own attempts to enact change in their field, the array of sources is more varied, in part due to the fragmentary nature of much of the available documentation. Authors who have focused on the subjectivity of media workers' memories have highlighted the use of interviews as a means to preserve these individuals' personal accounts, although

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70. Philip Napoli, "Public Interest Media Activism and Advocacy as a Social Movement: A Review of the Literature," *McGannon Center Working Papers* 21 (2007). Available at: https://fordham.bepress.com/mcgannon_working_papers/21/

71. Victor Pickard, "The Battle Over the FCC Blue Book: Determining the Role of Broadcast Media in a Democratic Society," *Media, Culture and Society* 33, no. 2 (2011), 177.

not always with a specific focus on oral history and all its theoretical and practical precepts.[72]

Oral history

For this project, the main sources of information for the dissertation were 27 interviews with individuals involved or otherwise connected to the creation of NAHJ. These include surviving members of the founding committee, the first three presidents and other early leaders, including the first executive director and members of the first boards of directors. In the interest of capturing the context in which the founding of NAHJ was inscribed, I also interviewed founders and leaders of the California Chicano News Media Association (CCNMA)—a regional organization that led the way to the creation of the national association and one of the founders of the National Association of Publishers (NAHP), another pan-ethnic entity created contemporaneously.

The video and audio recordings of the interviews and all supporting documentation, including pre-interview forms and transcripts, were added to the Political and Civic Engagement collection of the Voces Oral History Project at the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin Libraries. The interviews are covered by the original IRB exemption granted to Voces by the University of Texas Office of Research Support and Compliance.[73]

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72. Byerly and Warren, "At the margins of center." Gwyneth Mellinger, "Rekindling the Fire: The Compromise that Initiated the Formal Integration of Daily Newspaper Newsrooms" *American Journalism* 25, no. 3 (2008), 97-126.

73. As of 2018, oral history interviews no longer require IRB approval, according to revised federal guidelines. See: Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects,

The term "oral history" is variously used in reference to a research method based on in-depth interviewing, the set of theoretical precepts that explain and support its use in scholarship and the historical document that results from these interactions, as well as the interdisciplinary professional field that promotes its use.[74] From its introduction in the early 20th century, the increased accessibility and portability of recording technology has democratized its use—going from being a platform to record the views and remembrances of political and business elites to a multitude of uses, including expanding to the preservation of history and oral tradition for academic research, among other uses.

While the many uses of the term oral history are testament to the versatility of this methodology, this can lead to some confusion on what exactly differentiates this type of research methods that involve guided interactions, and at the same time how it can be set apart from other types of historical evidence. For clarity, I will work under the following practical definition, based on the foundational work of Valerie Yow and Trevor Lummis, as well as the best practices recommended of the Oral History Association: an oral history is a record—in this case, video and audio recordings and transcriptions—of personal narratives, elicited through

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82 C.F.R. § 7149 (2017), https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/01/19/2017-01058/federal-policy-for-the-protection-of-human-subjects.

74. Valerie R. Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*. (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2005). 3. Valerie Yow coined one of the most often cited definitions of oral history: "the recording of personal testimony delivered in oral form" and "the interviewing of eyewitness participants in the events of the past for the purpose of historical reconstruction." See also Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History: The Authenticity of Oral Evidence* (London: Hutchinson, 1987).

interviews with individuals who participated in or witnessed past events. This definition addresses both the presentation of the data—as recording preserved for posterity—but also its qualitative, subjective and narrative nature. And, in contrast with other ethnographic methods, including other life history interviews, it notes that the discussion is primarily concerned with the informants' interpretations of past events.

Regardless of the medium in which they are recorded, oral history interviews are at their source a document of human speech. This has several implications both on the nature and content of the data and on its form. First, there is the issue of preservation and access, often linked to political empowerment and advocacy. Interviews facilitate the preservation of the perspectives of groups and individuals that until recently were not represented appropriately in written/print documents and archives. In some cases, they might be the primary or one of very few ways to preserve aspects of everyday life ignored or minimized by institutions with the economic and cultural capital to preserve organized historical records. Compiling, organizing and maintaining archives is, after all, an endeavor that requires significant material and human resources.

One of the major drivers for the development of oral history as a field in the second half of the 20th century was the increased interest in incorporating the perspectives of the working class, women, immigrants and racialized groups to the historical record, as part of a shift in academia and as a form of activism.[75] The use

75. Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 6.

of oral history to put underrepresented groups and identities "on the record" extends to the field of journalism history, where the focus of scholarship has been on institutions and elites at the expense of recording the lives, careers and experiences of rank-and-file reporters and other media. "*Journalism* history" has for the most part not been "*journalist* history."[76]

Compared to "traditional" historical sources, usually thought of as documents found in institutional archives, interviews as recorded speech provide cues and clues that would not make the final draft of a letter or memo.[77] The orality and narrative structure of interviews adds many layers of meaning that get lost or distorted on paper: informants hesitate, stop to try to remember and address contradictions and gaps in the story as they go. They shift their intonation and volume when revisiting a particularly emotional stage of their lives. They code switch—other languages, slangs, particular phrases, nicknames, proverbs—all of this contributes to capturing the hidden layers of the "structure of feeling" beyond their own description of the events. Mistakes, gaps in memory, changes in rhythm—some of the main objections from critics of interviews as historical evidence—can actually add key information that would be missing in correspondence or autobiographical text. Capturing the interaction on video, as I

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76. Bonnie Brennen, "Toward a History of Labor and News Work: The Use of Oral Sources in Journalism History," *The Journal of American Histor*y 83, no. 2 (1996), 571-9. Hanno Hardt and Bonnie Brennen, eds. *Newsworkers: Toward a Theory of the Rank and File* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).

77. Alessandro Portelli, "What makes oral history different," in eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, *Second Edition*. (London: Routledge, 1998), 33.

did with about half of my interviews, adds even more complexity and richness by incorporating informants' body language, facial expressions and other forms of non-verbal communication.

Informants' own words and non-verbal cues thus provide an opening to an "expression and representation of culture", which includes "the dimension of memory, ideology and subconscious desires."[78] And yet these layers of information are not generated spontaneously, as a spoken version of a diary or memoir. Interviews are not static documents "emitted" by their creator, but unique historical documents crafted by interviewer and informant through interaction. For this reason, says Alessandro Portelli, they are inherently "artificial, variable, and partial."[79] They are artificial, rather than spontaneous, because they are guided by the researcher's goals as much as by narrators' own interpretations of events. They are variable, because the relationship and evolution of each interaction are particular to the context, the rapport between the participants, and other circumstantial aspects. They are partial, because oral testimonies do not have a clear beginning and a clear end—it is impossible to exhaust the memory of a single informant, again, because each interview is the result of a "selection produced by the mutual relationship."[80]

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78. Luisa Passerini, "Work ideology and consensus under Italian fascism," in eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, *First Edition*. (London: Routledge, 1998), 54.

79. Portelli, "What makes oral history different," 38.

80. Ibid, 40.

Oral history interviews, like other research techniques and methodologies based on recording "thick" descriptions of human practices and experiences, are also related to epistemologies that privilege the spoken word, interpersonal relationships and oral tradition. The centering of informants' examinations of their own lives and contexts is a central feature of studies that privilege feminist and postcolonial analytical frameworks, as in the case of Chicanx studies[81] and in folklore studies, among other connected fields.

One final aspect that I would like to highlight about oral history vis-à-vis other closely related methods, is its emphasis on the "historicity" of each interview. While oral history interviews share some the same general principles and even many basic features and best practices of life history interviews and other ethnographic methods, their primary end goal is to produce a record that can be publicly available for posterity, beyond the short-term research objectives. This means that each interview is meant to preserve information about specific, unique and identifiable individuals rather than generic cases to be combined with other data in the search for generalities. Oral history records are thus not anonymized, except on very special cases where the privacy is necessary to protect the interviewees from harm. On the contrary, it is encouraged for researchers to compile as much specific information as possible for each informant. As part of the

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81. Examples of this type of work include: Dolores Delgado Bernal, "Grassroots leadership reconceptualized: Chicana oral histories and the 1968 East Los Angeles school blowouts," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 19, no. 2 (1998), 113-42. Maylei Blackwell, *¡Chicana Power!: Contested Histories of Feminism in the Chicano Movement* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011). Emilio Zamora, "Raza Unida Party Women in Texas: Oral History, Pedagogy and Historical Interpretation," *US Latina & Latino Oral History Journal* 1 (2017).

research protocol, the Voces Oral History Project administers a pre-interview form with questions about interviewees' upbringing, education and work history. This can help gather precise facts about places and dates that are often lost in the middle of a narration. Interviewees can also provide documents, photographs and other ephemera, which are then archived together with the recording of their interview.

Informant selection

As opposed to broader projects that aim to capture the "feel" of a generation or people's perceptions of historical event,[82] this project had a narrow focus on a series of events that involved a relatively small and specific number of participants. The names of the NAHJ founders and first officers are part of the public record. As (former) members of the media, most of them have a visible track record and most are still active in public affairs, which makes them relatively easy to track and contact.

Most informants were contacted through the intervention of Professor Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, my dissertation committee chair and one of the founders of the organization. In a few cases, I established first contact using information found on the internet—LinkedIn profiles, professional websites, even social media records. Four participants had previously been interviewed for the Voces Oral History Project, and their contact information was included in the project's database.

Questionnaire

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82. Jorge Aceves-Lozano, "Un enfoque metodológico de las historias de vida," *Proposiciones* 29 (1999), 4.

The interview guides used in this project follow a life history approach, with a focus on the informants' professional development. Life history interviews are used to elicit a longitudinal, "emic" narrative of individual experience.[83] While this approach to interviewing is usually associated with classic works on how people experience social phenomena through generations,[84] they have been employed in a variety of research focused on memories of media, in projects that historicize media uses and consumption,[85] and most relevant to this dissertation, studies of media worker's professional trajectories.[86]

Life history interviews are among the most common techniques used in oral history, even though many projects and publications do not go into detail on how their approach to interviewing connects to those used in other disciplines. The Voces Oral History Project has used this type of interview for close to 20 years to capture the lives of Latinx veterans of World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and individuals involved in the political and civil rights activism.

In the case of this particular project, the early years of the NAHJ, the diversity of professional experiences and trajectories of the informants called for

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83. Jérôme Bourdon, "Media Remembering: The Contributions of Life-Story Methodology to Memory/Media Research," in *On Media Memory*, eds. Motti Neiger, Oren Meyers and Eyal Zandberg (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 62-73.

84. Daniel Bertaux, ed., *Biography and Society: The Life History Approach in Social Sciences* (London: Sage, 1981). Oscar Lewis, *Los hijos de Sánchez: Autobiografía de una familia mexicana* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1965).

85. José Carlos Lozano, "Film at the Border: Memories of Cinemagoing in Laredo, Texas," *Memory Studies* 10, no. 1 (2017), 35-48. Bourdon, "Media Remembering."

86. Meyers and Davidson, "The Journalistic Structure of Feeling."

some flexibility in the design and application of the interview guide. To guide the interviews and manage the available time, I assembled a general "career history" questionnaire that probed informants' educational and professional backgrounds, personal experiences with discrimination, views on race and ethnic and professional journalistic identity, followed by prompts to tell their story about their role in NAHJ, from the moment they first learned about the organization to their current degree of involvement (if any). Given that these interactions involve the sharing of very personal information, the use of "grand tour" questions is usually recommended to put the interviewee at ease—especially when using an obtrusive recording device. While in some cases, there was enough time to cover the entire development period and professional career of interviewees, I often had to limit the interview to a timeline of their memories of the NAHJ founding and the early years—and this was, in the end, the only section of the interview that was constant to all 28 informants.

Source criticism and composition

Writing history goes beyond a mere act of transcribing old sources into a new narrative. Much like an archeologist working with ancient artifacts, historians have a responsibility to evaluate their found evidence before incorporating any received facts or views to their interpretation of the events. Even going beyond the issue of asserting the authenticity of documentary sources, there are issues of accuracy, facticity and voice that should be assessed carefully as part of the research. In their classic book on historical methods in mass communication, James Startt and William David Sloan advance a method of source criticism, which

provides guidance in the probing of historical evidence for authenticity (external criticism; focused on form, comparisons with other documents) and credibility (internal criticism; focused on authorship, tone, content matters).[87] The methodical collection and examination of sources as described by Startt and Sloan reflect the process of qualitative analysis, from the organization and classification of the information to the extraction of historical facts, the assessment of the veracity of the information contained in them and the contraposition of utterances and claims against their context.[88] Much in line with the methodological toolbox that help ensure the validity of qualitative social science research methods, these processes provide a safeguard on two fronts: they prevent the researcher from imposing shallow interpretations on the sources consulted by emphasizing the "bracketing" of historians' own position, and prescribe the careful reading of factual claims made by those with the power to produce the documentation. As Startt wrote in an essay on the merits of historiography in mass communication, this work makes subjectivity—both that of the historian and of those involved in crafting and preserving the sources—an opportunity for a richer understanding of the people and events under study, rather than a threat to the legitimacy of the project.[89]

Composition

87. Startt and Sloan, *Historical Methods in Mass Communication*.

88. Ibid.

89. James D. Startt, "The Study of History: Truthful or Flawed?" *Historiography in Mass Communication* 1, no. 1 (2015), 15.

A careful examination of each step of the process of historical research, from the formulation of the research question to the presentation of the findings—reveals that these tasks are informed by the researcher's intuition and own position. Indeed, defining the chronology and periodization of events, establishing causational links and researching the context of events are all tasks of an interpretive nature. The assembling of the narrative is itself a work of theory building. Identifying causal relationships, establishing a timeline for transformative events and situating these processes in their cultural, ideological context is in itself a process of interpretation, as it lays out the framework of the different social forces and of the surrounding context in determining the course of events.

While the clear dissemination of the findings of empirical research is fundamental to any project, composition is particularly crucial to historical research because most conceptual contributions take form in the writing process. Assembling notes from documentary sources—or when oral history is used, pulling informants' quotes—into a narrative in itself entails establishing causal relationships, positing the existence of intervening factors and other forms of theory building. This makes the act of crafting prose an involved process: wording, order and proper documentation of claims makes writing as much an art as a merely technical skill.[90]

Field work

Field notes: My experiences in the field

90. Startt, "The Study of History."

I met most of my informants to conduct and record the interviews from January 2017 through the summer of 2018. With the material and logistical support of Voces, I was able to travel to California, Tucson, New York and Miami to conduct most interviews in person, following the basic protocol of other interviews conducted in the past with veterans, civil rights activists and other Latina/o leaders. The first 15 interviews were recorded on video, and the rest are captured on digital audio. When traveling to conduct interviews in person was not logistically feasible, as was the case in some of the later interviews, I recorded the interactions over the telephone or through a Skype call using a mixer connected to a computer.

The duration of the interviews themselves varied widely—from 45 minutes, when one of the informants had to cut the meeting short for a work-related commitment, to more than three hours spaced through an entire afternoon, with a lunch break. The locations also varied. During the phase of the research process when I was able to travel, most interviews took place at my interviewees' homes, as most of them are now retired. Some—the shortest—took place in offices and meeting rooms. Only three were conducted in newsroom facilities: these were recorded at WHYY (an NPR station in Philadelphia), KRIS (the NBC affiliate in Corpus Christi) and the Univision headquarters in Miami, where Elisabeth Perez-Luna, Maclovio Perez and Maria Elena Salinas, respectively, continued to work in 2017.

I went into this project knowing that there were very few writings about NAHJ and there was no publicly accessible archive to rely on, so there was some exploration and trial and error in the initial stages. Documentary materials were

difficult to come by, but highly valuable to complement the oral testimonials provided by my informants.[91] This is not unheard of in the field—historians have long observed that journalists and media organizations tend to be too focused on day-to-day operations to maintain files for external use. This was already observed by Allan Nevins in a time when major publications had healthier budgets, larger staffs and stronger connections to the non-profit and academic realms.[92] In the current era, when both journalism and its ancillary institutions face high economic uncertainty, the situation of archives and other sources of institutional memory is even more precarious.[93]

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91. This situation might change in the medium to long term. In 2018, as I entered the last stages of my dissertation work, the NAHJ leadership started exploring the possibility of donating its materials to a university library or to the Library of Congress. Weeks later, the president of the organization revealed the materials had been lost by the company that operated the Washington, DC storage units where the documents were kept after the closer of the organization's headquarters. (About a month later, the documents reappeared, with the explanation that it was the storage company that had confused its own records. The NAHJ has begun the process of inventorying its materials. There is no set timeline of when the materials will be transferred to a publicly accessible repository.)

92. Allan Nevins, "American Journalism and Its Historical Treatment," in *The American Journalism Reader*, eds. Bonnie Brennen and Hanno Hardt (New York: Routledge, 2010), 13. The dearth or total absence of archival materials is not an unprecedented challenge for journalism historians. In the mid-20th century, Allan Nevins had already acknowledged that many media organizations and individual journalists did not maintain archives and called on historians to look for alternative paths to the recovery of past events, including oral testimonies.

93. Letrell Crittenden, *Diagnosis NABJ: A Preliminary Study of a Post-Civil Rights Organization.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (2014). Crittenden encountered a similar situation while conducting research on the history of the National Association of Black Journalists. While he was given permission to access the organization's files, he found that they were highly incomplete and disorganized. This issue speaks to the precarity of these organizations, itself tied to the changes in the finances of news organizations and

Fortunately, the goodwill and generosity of some of my informants made it possible to compile a significant number of documents from the early years of NAHJ through the fieldwork period. I borrowed crates of documents were borrowed from the personal archives of Charlie Ericksen, the former publisher of the now-defunct Hispanic Link News Service in Washington, DC and one of the founders of NAHJ. These documents were shipped from Ericksen's home in Southern California area to Austin to be digitized for this research project. Frank Newton and Henry Mendoza also donated original programs and assorted ephemera from their years as CCNMA and NAHJ leaders. In all cases, the donated originals and copies of loaned documents will be added to the Voces files at the Benson Latin American Collection and made available to researchers.

During my trips to conduct interviews in California and New York, I was also able to work with archival materials hosted at research institutions. I consulted the Frank del Olmo Collection at the Oviatt Library, California State University, Northridge[94] and the Juan González Papers at the Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College (CUNY).[95]

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its ability and interest in funding philanthropic or educational initiatives. See Donnelly and Clark, "Supporting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Journalism."

94. The Del Olmo papers are one of very few, if not only, public repositories of CCNMA documents. Unfortunately, the organization's documents only date back to 1978, when the group was already six years old. Any descriptions of the formation of the organization are thus not contemporary.

95. In the same vein, the Gonzalez papers at El Centro present a very thorough view of Juan Gonzalez's term as president of the NAHJ, but are light on materials from the group's formation.

My original dissertation proposal, designed to cover only the formation of NAHJ, only contemplated interviewing the surviving members of what was originally called the "Planning Committee for the National Hispanic Media Association,"[96] as well as its coordinator, CCNMA and later NAHJ executive director Frank Cota-Robles Newton. As the interviews unfolded, however, I discovered that to really tell the story of how the organization came to be I would have to talk to other key individuals who did not necessarily participate in the founding of NAHJ, but who were close to the process as supporters or witnesses.

Reflexivity: Who is the researcher?

As mentioned before, the role of the researcher in crafting the oral history interviews is central enough to merit some reflection on my position with regard to oral history, Latinas/os in the United States and the journalism field. I came into the project and into my informants' homes and offices as an outsider in multiple ways. I introduced myself as a prospective academic working on a dissertation, rather than conducting interviews for a story or news article; as a Mexican national, rather than a US-born or US-educated Mexican American or Latino scholar; and as someone born after the NAHJ had already been established. I also do not have the experience of working in an American newsroom, and certainly not in one where Latinxs are a

96. The committee was formed in 1982—after the first national conferences of Latinx journalists—to design and formulate the structure of what eventually became NAHJ and was thus involved in the process of drafting the rules and regulations of the organization, gathering data on the situation of Latinxs in the field and building a network of potential members and leaders. One of the members of committee, and the organization's legal counsel, Juan Manuel García Passalacqua, died in 2010.

minority. Aside from a student membership in NAHJ that I maintained in 2015, my relationship with the organization and the broader history of Latinxs in journalism was only academic.

I was initially concerned that I could be too much of an outsider to have interviewees open up and talk at ease about their professional lives and how they felt as members of a group that was and continues to be poorly represented in the media and in newsrooms. Having one of the founders as my advisor certainly helped overcome the issue of approaching complete strangers out of the blue to tell me about their lives, but I was still concerned my views of US journalism and Latinx history would come across as too naïve, overly simplistic, or that my accent and issues with spoken English would get in the way of building rapport. (And this was after years of experience conducting oral history interviews!)

And how did he do?

While I won't claim that everything went according to plan, and that I was in control of the situation at all times, my experience was—thankfully—very positive throughout the entire project. I felt welcomed by the people I spoke to, in spite of their heavy time commitments and busy public lives, and perceived that in most cases, they shared a belief in the importance of documenting the early history of NAHJ, beyond my individual goals of writing a dissertation about it. My anxiety about doing justice to their careers and contributions was assuaged by my sources' eagerness to establish rapport.

Being an outsider might have been helpful, indeed—and this is not a very original or unique experience, as the methodological literature attests—as this

tended to encourage my interlocutors to organize their speech chronologically and articulate in-depth explanations of events and people they related to, rather than assume I was knowledgeable about their careers. In fact, some of the early interactions suggest that several of them wanted to "set the record straight" years after having become distanced from the organization. In a dynamic reminiscent of what Alessandro Portelli notes in the first chapter of The Battle of Valle Giulia, this complicity was a reflection how even "twice-told tales" told in a new context can elicit untold stories.[97] Portelli uses the phrase "untold stories, twice-told tales" to describe to the way in which the oral history interview, as a discrete event involving an informant and an interviewer, leads the former to reflect, organize and structure their narrative more carefully than they would in a more casual and familiar setting, like an after-dinner talk with family. This process is part of the "alliance" that interviewer and informant form during the interview, and is affected by participants' identity and structural position.

The depth and nature of my collaboration with each interviewee differed, and it is not difficult to identify that some perspectives might have a stronger presence than others in this dissertation. There were interviewees that were more guarded with how they described events and shared their own interpretations of them, and some interviews were just not deep or long enough to elicit many unique insights. It would be too facile to speculate that this is merely a matter of position, and that those who still have a stake in their relationship with NAHJ and the

97. Alessandro Portelli, *The battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 4.

broader media industry would have more to lose if they took a critical view of the organization. I do not identify such a correlation in my own reading of how interviews developed. In fact, I do think that this was more a matter of the context in which the interviews were conducted, and my own skills as an interviewer.

Many of the interviews were conducted when I still had a limited understanding of how the events surrounding NAHJ and CCNMA unfolded, and a significant amount of time during my interactions was devoted to crafting a timeline. While it is impossible to predict the myriad ways in which interviews could have developed differently, I think that the emphasis on fact-gathering came at the expense of deeper, more colorful reflections on the meaning and significance of the events. It could also have made some of them uneasy about the entire interview process. Several warned me that their memory of the events would not be as crisp, and that there was a possibility that their recollection of what happened and how it happened would be inaccurate or incomplete.

Processing the interviews

After each round of interviews, I turned the digital video and audio files of the interviews to the videographer at Voces for inclusion in the project's archives at the Benson Latin American Collection. As mentioned above, some informants provided me with documents that will be added to their files. In some cases—such as that of Charlie Ericksen—loaned documents were digitized for analysis, as they might be shipped back to his residence in California.

As part of the preparation for the writing process, I prepared a series of interview transcripts. This process was assisted by the automated close captioning

service on YouTube. The video site generates subtitles for all videos with a certain degree of audio quality; while the quality of the transcriptions is highly variable, they produce a workable first draft that can be reviewed for inaccuracies derived from unknown terms, pronunciation quirks or other reasons.

In addition to saving time and money, as the service is essentially "free" with any Google account, this tech-assisted transcription process helped capture some nuances of spontaneous, spoken communication. For example, these automated transcriptions record the uses of "crutch" words or other verbal filler that is typically excluded in manual transcription.

After several rounds of revisions to clean the automated captioning, the transcripts were read and cross-checked to assemble a timeline for the formation of NAHJ and its precursors. Since not all interviewees were active in NAHJ during the periods covered by this dissertation, and others did not remember all periods with the same level of detail, a perfect comparison of perspectives was not achieved. When appropriate, archival materials were used to confirm specific dates or the order of certain events.

Chapter 4

Setting the Scene: Antecedents and Context

While the National Association of Hispanic Journalists was not founded until 1984, a drive to organize Latina/o media professionals gained steam throughout the 1970s, as a number of local organizations started springing up in cities and regions with sizeable Latino communities. By that point, some of the major players in the field, including media conglomerates like Gannett and the national broadcast networks, had already started to show interest in the role of race/ethnicity in journalistic work, and the earliest initiatives to increase the number of "minorities" in the field were underway.

Yet the renewed interest in issues of inclusion and diversity did not happen as part of a mere awakening of industry leaders to the importance of representation. The gradual integration of "diversity" and "inclusion" initiatives into the discourse of what good, quality journalism was the corollary of a longer process that led to the role of inclusion and representation in journalism in an attempt to fulfill its social responsibility of including all groups in society.[98]

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98. Normative theories of the press have long considered the faithful representation of a community's constituencies as a core component of journalistic social responsibility. As decades of content analyses have shown, the representation of marginalized groups has historically been dismal in the newsrooms, on the pages and on the screens. See: Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, "Communities, Cultural Identity and the News," in *Changing the News: The Forces*

In the decades preceding the formation of NAHJ and its equivalents for other underrepresented identity groups, several social changes had started to put pressure on fields of cultural production. On one end of the spectrum, women, African American, Latinx and Native American activists had been advocating for changes in the portrayals of their communities, and in some cases, arguing for inclusive hiring. Closer to the center of power, critics in academia, government and the publishing industry itself—think of the Hutchins and Kerner Commissions—had also been calling for change through white papers and reports that advocated for a changed attitude toward race.

This chapter focuses on the points were "Latino history" and "journalism history"[99] converged in a time where race, ethnicity and identity in general were at the forefront of US politics, and when the notion of Latinidad made its big entrance into the American consciousness. I present a broad overview of Latinos/as in the American news media in the decades preceding the emergence of the organization in 1984. The 1960s and 1970s fall in the latter part of what has been called the "high modernist" era of American journalism.[100] These were the decades in which the dominant contemporary norms, structure and routines that characterize the profession had already become consolidated and were balanced with commercial

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Shaping Journalism in Uncertain Times, eds. Wilson Lowrey and Peter Gade (London: Taylor & Francis, 2011).

99. This distinction between "ethnic" and journalism history is rather arbitrary—more an artifact of the minimal amount of research on race/ethnicity, identity and journalism than an actual separation between complementary fields.

100. Daniel C. Hallin, *We Keep America on Top of the World: Television Journalism and the Public Sphere* (London: Routledge, 1994), 152.

pressures, as national newspaper chains and other mass media reached their greatest reach and influence in these years or shortly after. However, even as demographic changes brought more people of color to American cities and in the aftermath of civil rights movement and multiple episodes of unrest erupted all over the country, very few newsrooms employed journalists of color on a full-time basis.

The baseline

A history of marginalization

Up until the mid-20th century, the mainstream dominant press was virtually closed to journalists of color, who tended to report almost exclusively for ethnic media. The professional networks and the upper management of major publications were almost exclusively Anglo men. Many universities with journalism programs, like Texas and Missouri, were segregated by law and had negligible numbers of students of color until well into the 1950s.[101] Media professionals of color who tried to get jobs with general-market publications had to overcome multiple obstacles.[102]

Exclusion was a fact of life for people of color beyond media. Until the sweeping change that took place as a corollary of the various civil rights struggles, most realms of public life in the United States, including many professions, were segregated across racial and ethnic lines. Institutions like the media were off-limits

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101. Aimee Edmondson and Earnest Perry, Jr., "Objectivity and'The Journalist's Creed.' *Journalism History* 33, no. 4 (2008), 233-240.

102. Rodger Streitmatter, *Raising Her Voice: African-American Women Journalists Who Changed History* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1994), 111.

to most members of racialized ethnic groups, who faced prejudiced attitudes from those with the power to hire and assign work.[103] Beyond the everyday instances of discrimination, there were many systemic obstacles: limited educational opportunities, relative economic deprivation and in some cases, geographic isolation.

The case of Mexican Americans in the southwestern US and Puerto Ricans can be illustrative of the multiple challenges that racialized Latinx communities faced in the early to mid-20th century. After the United States annexed the Mexican territories that are now the US Southwest through the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, communities of Mexican descent found themselves outnumbered in a new, strange country with a new majority culture and an alien legal system. Over time, Mexican Americans lost political and economic influence and were marginalized from the centers of power. By the end of the 19th century, Mexicans had become racialized as an "inferior", "foreign" and non-American group, and were placed in a subjugated and precarious economic and social position with respect to the Anglo-Saxon majority all through the Southwestern states.[104]

Out of power in a society divided strictly across racial and ethnic lines, Mexican Americans faced discriminatory treatment, legal and extralegal violence and brutality, and were provided with inadequate public services. The severity of

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103. Gwyneth Mellinger, *Chasing Newsroom Diversity: From Jim Crow to Affirmative Action* (Urbana, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

104. José A. Cobas, Jorge Duany and Joe R. Feagin, "Racializing Latinos: Historical Background and Current Forms," in *How the United States Racializes Latinos: White Hegemony and Its Consequences*, eds. José A. Cobas, Jorge Duany and Joe R. Feagin (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2009), 4.

the segregation has been compared by some scholars to that of the Jim Crow South,[105] but with the added ambiguity of an inconsistent racial classification, as Mexican Americans were legally "White"[106] and high degrees of cross-border mobility, with cycles of mass migration from Mexico followed by moral panics and expulsions.[107] One facet to this system of segregation that is particularly relevant to the history of exclusion from media is that of education. Mexican children were segregated into underfunded and inadequately staffed elementary schools in many communities in Texas, California and Arizona.[108] Those who reached high school—

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105. Rodolfo Acuña, *Occupied America: The Chicano's Struggle Toward Liberation* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1972). David Montejano, *Anglos and Mexicans in the Making of Texas, 1836-1986* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987). Harry P. Pachon and Joan W. Moore, "Mexican Americans," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 454, no. 1 (1981). Manuel G. Gonzales, *Mexicanos: A History of Mexicans in the United States, Second Edition* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009).

106. Neil Foley, "Over the Rainbow: *Hernandez v. Texas*, *Brown v. Board of Education* and Black v. Brown," *Chicano-Latino Law Review* 25, no. 1 (2005), 141. For a very long time, Mexican American activists and their advocates fought discrimination and segregation in the courts by arguing that people of Mexican descent were of the "Caucasian Race" and thus entitled to equal accommodations and treatment under the law, as opposed to African Americans and Asian Americans. However, in 1954, attorneys Gus Garcia and Carlos Cadena argued successfully in *Hernandez v. Texas* that Mexican Americans were entitled to a jury inclusive of their peers, making the case that people of Mexican descent were distinct from Anglos. Later cases pertaining to school segregation and other matters involving race included both African Americans and Mexican Americans as ethnic groups separate from whites.

107. Mae Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004).

108. While the fight for equity in funding and other aspects continues in many US communities, the practice of maintaining separate "Mexican schools" in multiethnic communities was mostly abandoned by the 1970s.

and many could not for various reasons—were dissuaded from continuing their education or treated in a discriminatory manner. They were often "tracked" into the trades or discouraged from pursuing higher education altogether,[109] while Anglos were able to take advantage of the full extent of educational resources and had an easier path into middle-class professions, such as journalism.[110] This dual, inequitable educational system provided the trigger for activism in many Mexican American communities throughout the 20th century, and in several localities provided the trigger for a wave of political activism.

The history of Puerto Rican racialization in the US follows a parallel route, touching upon some of the same themes—colonization, racialization, circular migration—but with a different relationship to legal citizenship. After Puerto Rico and other former Spanish colonies came under US control in the aftermath of the Spanish American War, their inhabitants of the island were initially incorporated into the United States as colonial subjects and after the 1914 Jones Act, as citizens. As with other nations absorbed into the US after the 19th century expansionist wars, Puerto Ricans were portrayed as a backwards people in political debates and

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109. Guadalupe San Miguel, Jr. and Richard Valencia, "From the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to Hopwood: The Educational Plight and Struggle of Mexican Americans in the Southwest," *Harvard Educational Review* 68, no. 3 (1998), 353-413. Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, *Texas Mexican Americans and Post-War Civil Rights* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), 16.

110. By the 1960s, journalists were as a whole a fairly affluent and educated group—a far cry from the profession's mythical working-class roots. For reference: Leo C. Rosten, "President Roosevelt and the Washington Correspondents," *Public Opinion Quarterly* 1, no. 1 (1937), 36-52. William L. Rivers, "The Correspondents After 25 Years," *Columbia Journalism Review* 1, no. 1 (1962), 6. Stephen Hess, "Washington Reporters," *Society* (May/June 1981), 56.

in media discourse.[111] The territory was setup with an institutional framework that left it unable to control its own internal affairs—including key infrastructure and economic decisions that continue to hamper its development—and no representation in the Union's body politic. When economic pressures pushed many Puerto Ricans to seek opportunities in the mainland, the cumulative effect of a prejudiced, racialized view of the island, the linguistic differences and relative economic deprivation made the experience of living in New York or Philadelphia not all that dissimilar to what Mexican Americans experienced in urban communities in Texas and California.

In retelling their life stories, several NAHJ leaders recalled growing up in divided communities and facing or witnessing discrimination when being singled out as members of an underrepresented minority in the years after World War II. Some of the NAHJ and CCNMA leaders I spoke to had memories of growing up in communities with segregated housing and labor markets, while others shared vivid memories of facing or witnessing overt discrimination. NBC public affairs executive Jay Rodriguez recalled growing up in the "Mexican side" of La Verne, California during the Great Depression. While he talked about a happy childhood, with all his basic needs provided for by his parents, Rodriguez also remembered being compelled by school authorities to attend the "Mexican school" in town.[112] Juan

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111. Ilia Rodriguez, "News Reporting and Colonial Discourse: The Representation of Puerto Ricans in U.S. Press Coverage of the Spanish-American War," *Howard Journal of Communications* 9, no. 4 (1998), 283-301.

112. Jay Rodriguez, video interview by Vinicio Sinta, Palm Desert, CA, April 2, 2017, Voces Oral History Project, Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries.

Gonzalez, one of the founders of NAHJ and its president from 2002 to 2004, was born in Puerto Rico and moved with his family to New York at a very young age. Having been raised almost exclusively by his monolingual Spanish speaking grandmother, he described his initial schooling experience as "pretty traumatic."[113]

Others shared memories of outright discrimination and abuse. Frank Gomez, a veteran foreign affairs official and public relations executive who served in the NAHJ founding committee, was born into a Mexican and French-Canadian family in South Dakota, later grew up in Vancouver, Washington, a suburb of Portland. As the only Mexican American among thousands of students, he remembered having to negotiate a complex identity and being bullied for his assumed ethnicity.

> I remember when I was a young boy and my brothers and sisters would tell people we were Spanish and not Mexican… My mother was French Canadian but with a name like Gomez, everybody assumes you're Mexican… And we already sensed some shame, something embarrassing about being of partial Mexican heritage… And when I was in high school… I used to live in the country but we went into town in my sophomore year in high school and I remember being called "a wetback" and being kicked down the stairs by bullies.[114]

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113. Juan González, video interview by Lillian Jiménez, May 2005, Center for Puerto Rican Studies, Hunter College, City University of New York.

114. Frank Gomez, audio interview by Vinicio Sinta, New York, May 18, 2017, Voces Oral History Project, Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries.

Wind of change

The pioneers: Early experiences in journalism

As outsiders to what was an exclusionary profession, journalists of color started joining mainstream newsrooms consistently only in the mid 20th century. While vibrant Black and Mexican American presses blossomed over the years as part of what democracy scholars have dubbed counter-public spheres, very few journalists managed to break the "color line," and bylines from journalists of color in the mainstream press were exceptional until well into the 20th century. Prior to what historians like Alice Bonner and Wayne Dawkins have referred to as the "desegregation of American newsrooms,"[115] there were few ways to access the networks that afforded advancement to aspiring journalists.

Many pioneers who had the opportunity to discuss their experiences working in mostly-white media companies have related facing unusual challenges, ranging from subtle prejudice to outright exclusion. The experiences of African American journalists are by far the best known, especially when investigated along with the histories of civil rights activism and political and civic engagement.

James Hicks, Carl Rowan, Ethel Payne and other black reporters and commentators who were pioneers in their respective publications and stations had to deal with distrust inside the newsroom and with open discrimination in the communities where they reported.[116] Robert Churchwell, Sr., the first African

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115. Bonner, *Changing the Color of the News*. Wayne Dawkins, *Black Journalists: The NABJ Story* (Newport News, VA: August Press, 1997).

116. Wallace Terry, *Missing Pages: Black Journalists of Modern America: An Oral History* (New York: Carroll & Graf, 2007).

American reporter to work for a white-owned newspaper in the South—the *Nashville Banner*—was not allowed to work in the publication's newsroom in the five years he worked there, in the early 1950s.[117]

The work of Pamela Newkirk, Earnest Perry and Clint Wilson on the experiences of African American journalists in and out of mainstream media newsrooms during the last century[118] all point toward a pervasive tension between the pressure to follow professional norms that reward conformity[119] and the news workers' own identification of inequities.

Responses in American journalism

Civil rights and American journalism: The Kerner Report and beyond

This chapter looks at several reactions in different social institutions connected to NAHJ: in addition to the Kerner Commission Report, the government had started to provide resources for media and arts training programs for people of color as part of the Great Society social programs pushed by the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. Activists, who included the cultural realm in their action agenda—challenging stereotypes and exclusion and calling for the hiring of more

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117. "Black History Month: Robert Churchwell Sr. was pioneering journalist," *Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Feb. 11, 2015. Retrieved from: https://www.tennessean.com/story/news/2015/02/11/black-history-month-robert-churchwell-pioneering-journalist/23242779/.

118. Earnest L. Perry, Jr., "It's time to force a change." *Journalism History*, 28, no. 2 (2002), 85. Pamela Newkirk, *Within the Veil: Black Journalists, White Media*. (New York: New York University Press, 2000). Wilson, Gutierrez & Chao, *Racism, Sexism and the Media*.

119. Sonya Alemán, "Locating Whiteness in Journalism Pedagogy." *Critical Studies in Media Communication 31*, no. 1 (2014), 72-88.

people of color; and journalists themselves, both Anglo and people of color, management and rank-and-file started organizing to develop pathways for minority youth to become employed in the media.

The successive waves of activism and organizing that culminated in the major civil rights reforms of the 1960s were part of a turning point for race/ethnicity in American journalism. Several events from this decade are seen as a turning point for efforts to increase diversity in the media. In a decade-plus of covering civil rights and other types of activism, editors and reporters came in touch with communities of color like never before. Major publications based on the East coast sent teams of reporters and visual journalists to the South to document the work of activists for years. For some, it was a transformational experience.[120] Several scholars of the African American civil rights movement have highlighted the activists' strategic use of media coverage to call attention to their demands and build support among sympathizers outside of the South. The way in which national newscasts disseminated images of the repression of non-violent activists during "Bloody Sunday" in Selma, Alabama, is seen as a turning point for voting rights.[121]

After decades of coordinated activism that spanned multiple organizational fields,[122] civil rights activists were victorious in getting the government to pass

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120. Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff. *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006).

121. Laurie Fluker, "The Making of a Medium and a Movement: National Broadcasting Company's Coverage of the Civil Rights Movement," (PhD diss., University of Texas at Austin, 1996). David E. Sumner, "Nashville, nonviolence, and the newspapers: The convergence of social goals with news values," *Howard Journal of Communication* 6, no. 1-2 (1995), 102-113.

sweeping legislation to eliminate many of the remaining vestiges of Jim Crow and protect the right to vote of millions of Americans. But the real prize—the guarantee of equality in economic opportunity, the safety from police brutality and many other pending injustices—remained elusive for many, including outside of the South. These prevailing inequities contributed to the breaking out of intense episodes of unrest in African American neighborhoods of several U.S. cities, with the largest of these being the Watts riots of 1965 and the unrest that engulfed Detroit in 1967. As part of his response to the latter, President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed a bipartisan committee to investigate the causes of the riots and recommend solutions.

In its final report, the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, better known as the Kerner Commission after its chair, Illinois Governor Otto Kerner, Jr., attributed the unrest to systemic racism and called on the government to make sweeping policy changes and invest in African American communities. In Chapter 15 of the report, the commission aimed its criticism towards the news media, accusing them of covering race inadequately both in terms of quantity and quality. The report went on to recommend an expansion and improvement of news coverage of African Americans, as well as an increase in the hiring and promotion of minority journalists, among other changes.[123] The prescriptions provided by the report went on to inform a wave of changes in cultural and media policy and

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122. Fligstein and McAdam, *A Theory of Fields*, 126.

123. *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, March 1, 1968. (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1968).

provided momentum to local and intramural initiatives to increase the visibility of African Americans and Black American culture in US media.[124] These efforts went on to benefit US Latinas/os when applied generally to minority groups, as was the case for some media and arts training programs that recruited Mexican Americans in California.[125]

Diversity in the zenith of mass media

Mass media, as traditionally understood in studies of American communication, reached the peak of their influence as economic entities in the second half of the 20th century. Before the fragmentation and subsequent financial decline brought by changes in distribution and the increase in narrowcasting and specialized offerings, media corporations with national reach, like the "Big Three" television networks and newspaper conglomerates like Gannett and Capital Cities were still expanding in size and influence.

Riding the momentum of the years of intense civil rights organizing in the south and southwestern United States and the moment of reckoning brought upon by the Kerner Commission and the actions taken from within the field, these

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124. Most of the literature on diversity and inclusion in journalism start their narrative at the publication of the Kerner Commission Report. For more on the report and its short and medium-term outcomes, see: Carolyn Byerly and Clint Wilson II, "Journalism as Kerner Turns 40: Its Multicultural Problems and Possibilities," *Howard Journal of Communication* 20 (2009), 209-221. Todd S. Burroughs, "Kerner's Other Black Explosion," *Howard Journal of Communication* (2018), advance publication.

125. One example of this type of initiative is the emergence of film training workshops aimed at underrepresented communities. These were supported in part by federal government funding. See: Chon Noriega, *Shot in America: Television, the State, and the Rise of Chicano Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) 102.

corporations put their financial health and geographic spread to work for a number of diversity initiatives.

Among the early initiatives, those enacted by the American Society of News Editors (ASNE) are the best known and the ones that have been subject of the most scholarly research. The organization, founded in 1922, was long an exclusive organization composed exclusively of Anglo men, who represented until the 1960s a virtual totality of all newsroom managers in the United States, at least for "mainstream" (general market) media. Once the ferment of the civil rights era began to shatter the consensus of an Anglo, male and mostly politically conservative press leadership, some notable members of the organization started proposing interventions to recruit more African American journalists into US newsrooms.[126] In the 10 years after the Kerner report was made public, ASNE admitted some of its first members of color, created a "Minorities Committee" that met at each annual convention to discuss the state of integration in member publications,[127] and set a now infamous industry goal of matching the racial/ethnic demographics of newsrooms with those of the country by the year 2000.[128]

Another famous initiative launched very soon after the Kerner report was the creation of the Summer Program in Journalism for Members of Minority Groups

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126. Mellinger, *Chasing Newsroom Diversity*, 74.

127. The 1982 convention proceedings of ASNE show a section for a "Subcommittee on Hispanics."

128. As stated in several passages of this dissertation, the goal of achieving demographic parity with the United States by 2000 did not pan out, and ASNE postponed the benchmark to 2025.

(later renamed the Michele Clark Fellowship Program) in 1968. The program, housed at Columbia University and directed at its onset by legendary *See It Now* producer Fred Friendly provided prospective journalists of color with an intensive training regime, looking to facilitate their break or transition into news media.[129] Friendly, a former executive at CBS News, had by then moved to higher education as a faculty member at Columbia and had a history of collaborating with philanthropic entities in what became the fledging "diversity" field. In this particular venture, he worked closely with the Ford Foundation.[130]

After eight years, the Columbia Summer Program lost support from its corporate partners. Some of its core champions, including Robert Maynard and CCNMA's own Frank Sotomayor took the training initiative to the University of California, Berkeley, where it eventually provided the foundation for the Institute for Journalism Education, later renamed the Maynard Institute for Journalism Education (MIJE).[131]

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129. Mary Alice Basconi, "Summer in the City, 1968-74: Columbia University's Minority-Journalist Training Program," *Journalism History* 34, no. 2 (2008), 62-75.

130. Basconi, "Summer in the City, 1968-74," 64. As one of the largest and best-positioned philanthropic organizations in the United States, the Ford Foundation played an important role in normalizing the now-pervasive view of American multiculturalism as integrated by a number of discrete, pan-ethnic "national" racial/ethnic groups. See also Jiannbin Lee Shiao, *Identifying Talent, Institutionalizing Diversity: Race and Philanthropy in Post-Civil Rights America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

131. Bonner, *Changing the Color of the News*. The institute was named after Maynard following his death in 1993.

The MIJE quickly became a leading referent for press integration activists, due to the prominent position that John Maynard and Nancy Hicks had in debates over press integration from their onset.[132] Several key members of the group that ran the Columbia Summer program later found themselves affiliated with the MIJE, and through it had connections with some of the corporate and philanthropic sponsors of diversity programs and organizations.

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132. Maynard later became a leading figure in the history of African American inroads into mainstream news media, as the first publisher (and owner) of a general market newspaper, the *Oakland Tribune*. He is one of very few among integration or diversity journalist-activists to be consistently acknowledged in general histories of US news media.

Chapter 5

A Constellation of Latinx Journalist Organizations

If the sixties were years of ferment for communities of Latin American origin across the United States, the two decades that followed saw that momentum become institutionalized as the concept of a pan-ethnic "Latino" community entered and become normalized in political, business and commercial cultural discourse.[133] In the intervening years, institutions in fields that dealt with representation adapted their outlook on ethnicity to accommodate what originally was a collection of small, dispersed Mexican, Puerto Rican and Cuban communities. This process led in time to the normalization of the idea of a discrete, national Latinx population equivalent to those of African Americans, Native Americans and Asian Americans.

This process resulted in the consolidation of organizations that emerged in the late 1960s and the emergence of new groups that had a pan-ethnic, national

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133. G. Cristina Mora, "Cross-Field Effects and Ethnic Classification: The Institutionalization of Hispanic Panethnicity, 1965 to 1990," *American Sociological Review* 79, no. 2 (2014), 183-210. Suzanne Oboler, *Ethnic Labels, Latino Lives: Identity and the Politics of (Re)presentation in the United States* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995). William Vincent Flores and Rina Benmayor, eds., *Latino Cultural Citizenship: Claiming Identity, Space, and Rights* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1997).

scope as part into their vision and organizational structure. Some of these groups, like the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) and the National Council for La Raza (NCLR, now UnidosUS), had their start in the late 1960s as regional entities focused on a single national origin group, as their name suggests. In the following decades, however, both underwent a process of "going national" that shifted their organizational structure and fundamental mission.[134] This process did not, however, follow a linear, neat path toward growth; many of these groups underwent growing pains, as mission drift and competing demands from constituencies and sponsors resulted in tensions that in some cases threatened the existence of these organizations.

From the early 1970s through the incorporation of NAHJ in 1984, the expansion of *Latinidad* as a meaningful organizing framework expanded to the field of media and journalism. A network of local journalist organizations emerged across the United States in the space of a decade. The California Chicano News Media Association (CCNMA) was the first to emerge, in 1972. With the support of the Gannett Foundation and the logistical and intellectual support of a network of journalists from across the United States, CCNMA provided the basic infrastructure for the formation of NAHJ in the early eighties.

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134. For additional background on the origins of MALDEF and UnidosUS, see Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, *Texas Mexican Americans and Post-War Civil Rights* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016). Benjamin Marquez, "Mexican-American Political Organizations and Philanthropy: Bankrolling a Social Movement," *Social Service Review* 77, no. 3 (2003): 329-346.

Following the previous chapter's presentation of the broad context in which the creation of organizations of journalists of color was inscribed, this chapter will present the narrative of NAHJ's creation. I will start with the emergence of local organizations in the southwest and beyond, with a focus on the largest and most successful one: CCNMA. I then track the evolution of CCNMA from a small gathering of reporters in Los Angeles to a regional organization that attracted attention from all over the country. The organization's success led to their celebration in 1982 of the first national conventions of Latinx professionals from around the country,[135] and these in turn inspired the formation of NAHJ.

Chicano Journalists Organize

The Los Angeles metropolitan area has long been one of the major centers of Mexican American culture. As the largest agglomeration in the US/Mexico borderlands, the city long boasted a significant Mexican presence. In the mid 20th century the city was also a national center for media and the arts; this meant that it was one of the primary entryways for US Latinxs into creative professions. The relationship between the local media and Mexican Americans was however not always constructive. Local newspapers like the *Los Angeles Times* and *Los Angeles Herald Times* were long characterized by coverage that was neglectful of, when not outright hostile, toward Mexicans in Southern California. One particularly visible example of this coverage is the very negative coverage given to Mexican American

135. While the 1982 National Hispanic Media Convention held in San Diego is sometimes referred to as the first gathering of its type in writings about NAHJ's formation, it was preceded by a Spanish-language media conference held in Los Angeles in September of the same year.

youth in the weeks leading to the "Zoot Suit Riots" of 1943.[136] The history of Latinx portrayals in film and television fiction has been equally problematic.[137]

The marginal situation of Mexican Americans in Los Angeles is a local equivalent to the broader exclusion of Latino communities from the centers of political, economic and cultural power across the US, covered in the previous chapter. By the mid-20th century, the city, which grew from a small Mexican outpost centered around historic Olvera Street to today's Southern California megalopolis, was segregated and offered few opportunities for social mobility. The bulk of the Mexican American population was concentrated in working class and impoverished areas east of downtown Los Angeles, with limited amenities. The community's relation to governmental institutions like schools and the police were

136. Ralph H. Turner and Samuel J. Surace "Zoot-Suiters and Mexicans: Symbols in Crowd Behavior," *American Journal of Sociology* 62, no. 1 (1956), 14-20. Felix F. Gutierrez, "Latinos in the Media in the United States: An Overview," paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Acapulco, Mexico (1980).

137. Early Hollywood westerns tended to depict Mexican men and women as morally deficient, undisciplined and dirty, among other stereotypes. These negative portrayals led to some of the first episodes of media activism in the 1920s, as theater owners in communities with large Mexican and Mexican American populations threatened to boycott movies that reflected these tropes. In later years, the depictions of Mexicans and Latinos/as became slightly more varied, within a limited array of stereotypes.

For more information, see: Charles Ramirez Berg, *Latino Images in Film: Stereotypes, Subversion and Resistance* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002). Nancy de los Santos. *The Bronze Screen*. Chon Noriega, *Shot in America: Television, the State and the Rise of Chicano Cinema* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). María Eugenia Muñoz, *Expanding the Televisual Borders*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles (2009).

contentious.[138] And like in Texas and other parts of the country, these inequities were met with resistance and episodes of heightened activism and unrest. Chicanx activists in Los Angeles, like African Americans and other Mexican American communities across the US, mobilized against systemic discrimination in the second half of the sixties. Two issues and events connected to the Chicano movement in East Los Angeles are particularly salient in the runup to the creation of CCNMA: the Los Angeles "Blowouts" of 1968 and the Chicano Moratorium of 1970.

In the "Blowouts," Mexican American students at seven high schools from the Los Angeles Unified School District—Garfield, Roosevelt, Lincoln, Belmont, Wilson, Venice and Jefferson—walked out to protest discrimination and demand the recognition and inclusion of Mexican culture in the curriculum and school activities. In these protests, which were among the very first major actions associated with the Chicano movement in California, activists asserted a *mestizo* racial/ethnic identity and a more politicized, ideological outlook. This stood in contrast to earlier Mexican American activism, which was either more identified with Mexico or promoted assimilation to the dominant Anglo mainstream.[139] Similar protests took place in other parts of the US Southwest in the aftermath of

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138. Ernesto Chávez, *"¡Mi Raza Primero!" (My People First): Nationalism, Identity and Insurgency in the Chicano Movement in Los Angeles, 1966-1978* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002), 9. James Diego Vigil, *A Rainbow of Gangs: Street Cultures in the Mega-City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002).

139. Juan Gómez-Quiñones and Irene Vásquez, *Making Aztlán: Ideology and Culture of the Chicana and Chicano Movement, 1966-1977* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2014).

the Blowouts, most notably in Crystal City, Texas, where student activism eventually led to the formation of La Raza Unida Party.[140]

At the time of the blowouts, Frank Cruz, was a teacher at Lincoln High, and a colleague of Salvador "Sal" Castro, an educator who became heavily involved in the protest, acting as an advisor to student activists. Castro was arrested and charged with conspiracy and disturbing the peace for his role in the protests. Civil rights attorney Herman Sillas, who represented Castro and other Chicano movement activists, summoned Cruz as one of his witnesses. Years later, when Cruz was working as a journalist and trying to organize CCNMA, Sillas lent his law office in downtown Los Angeles as a temporary headquarters for the nascent organization and assisted them in the incorporation process.

Another major event connected with the experiences and the zeitgeist of the emergence of CCNMA was the Chicano Moratorium, a broad coalition of activists who organized protests against the Vietnam War. The protests were put together by an entity called the National Chicano Moratorium Committee, assembled in Southern California by students—some of them veterans from the Blowouts of 1968—and members of the Brown Berets, a militant Chicano organization

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140. There was a parallel growth in the number and size of young Chicano activist groups in other parts of the Southwest. In Texas, these organizations also organized walkouts and other direct action protests, before coalescing into a political party. See: David Montejano. *Quixote's Soldiers: A Local History of the Chicano Movement, 1966-1981* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010). José Ángel Gutiérrez, *The Making of a Chicano Militant: Lessons from Cristal* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).

comparable to the Black Panthers and the Young Lords.[141] After a series of smaller protests in 1969, the Moratorium Committee and its network called for what would become its largest protest in East Los Angeles and the largest demonstration associated with the 1960s Chicano movement.

On August 29, 1970, a contingent of 20,000 to 30,000 protestors marched down Whittier Boulevard and gathered in Laguna Park (now Salazar Park), well in the heart of East LA. In terms of numbers, the event was in a way the biggest show of strength for Chicano mobilizing in Southern California.

The protests, however, were marred by violence. After a series of clashes with police, who declared the march illegal, an all-out confrontation broke out in the area around the park, and officers attacked protestors, in the voice of some witnesses, indiscriminately.[142] As historian Mario T. García put it, it was "the high point of the Movement, but it was also the lowest."[143]

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141. The Brown Berets, like the SNCC, Black Panthers and the Young Lords in the northeast, were militant political organizations focused on fighting police brutality, promoting educational reform and anti-poverty activism, as well as some issues specifics to Mexican American communities, like supporting the farmworkers' struggle in the US Southwest.

142. Mario T. García, *The Chicano Generation: Testimonios of the Movement* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2015).

143. This quote is taken from a piece written by García to promote his book of testimonials of the Moratorium: Mario T. García, "An important day in U.S. history: The Chicano Moratorium," *National Catholic Reporter* (Aug. 27, 2015). Retrieved from: https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/important-day-us-history-chicano-moratorium.

In the end, four people were killed amidst all the chaos, including Rubén Salazar, a pioneering Mexican American reporter who for a long time reported and wrote a column for the *Los Angeles Times*.

While the importance of the 1970 Moratorium as an event for the Los Angeles Chicano movement cannot be overstated, its particular salience for Mexican American and Latinx journalists comes from the lore surrounding the career and the untimely death of Rubén Salazar. Salazar is probably the most famous 20th century Mexican American journalist, and one of the icons of the Chicano movement. His career trajectory, thoroughly documented by scholars of Mexican American history, provides a compelling illustration of the clash of activist impetus and professional orthodoxy.

Born in Ciudad Juárez and raised in El Paso in a middle-class family, Ruben Salazar studied journalism at Texas Western College (now the University of Texas at El Paso) and went on to have a very prolific career, starting out at *El Paso Herald-Post* before moving to California. He eventually joined the *Los Angeles Times*. In a time where journalists of color in the mainstream press were a rarity, Salazar had a varied career, covering both domestic and international issues. When he returned to the *LA Times* after a stint in Mexico City, the Chicano movement was running at full steam.[144]

This was a transformational period in Salazar's career. Once reluctant to write about Mexican Americans, for the fear of becoming pigeonholed as an "ethnic"

144. Rubén Salazar and Mario T. García. *Border Correspondent: Selected Writings, 1955-1970.* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1995).

reporter, Salazar became a passionate advocate of Chicana/o issues. After several years of acting as a sort of ambassador for the Mexican American community in Los Angeles media, he left the *Times* in 1970 to work as the news director at KMEX, a Spanish-language television channel in Los Angeles that later became integrated which the Univision network. A few months after his debut in Latina/o-oriented broadcasting, he was killed by a tear gas canister shot by a sheriff's deputy in the middle of the chaos of the 1970 Chicano Moratorium.

At the time of his death, Salazar was a highly influential figure among Chicana/o activists and journalists. He was one of the first Latinos/as to climb the ranks of what was then an unwelcoming field, but he also, eventually, used his visibility and the prestige of his platform to inform the public on issues and people who received little coverage outside of the Spanish-language press. Furthermore, Salazar, who had succeeded as a prolific adherent to the professional orthodoxy of the time, became a noted critic of "objectivity" and a supporter of a journalism that "rocked the boat" in advocating for the Mexican American community.[145] He also tried to sow the seeds for an organization of Chicana/o media professionals. According to an interview with Felix Gutierrez, a noted Latino media historian and

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145. In an interview with Bob Navarro for KNXT-TV, in Los Angeles, Salazar defended his claim that reporters could advocate for their community just like the "general media" advocated for the pervasive "economy" and "way of life." See: "Slain Latino Journalist Rubén Salazar, Killed 40 Years Ago in Police Attack, Remembered as Champion of Chicano Rights," *Democracy Now*. (2010, August 31). Retrieved from: https://www.democracynow.org/2010/8/31/slain_latino_journalist_ruben_salazar_killed

former executive director of CCNMA, right before his death Salazar was working to create a National Chicano Media Association.[146]

CCNMA's connection to the East LA Blowouts, the Chicano Moratorium and Ruben Salazar's life and career are deeper than just a name or an affiliation. First, the life and work of Rubén Salazar were for some of the early organizers a first link to the world of media and journalism. At a time when Spanish-surnamed bylines in mainstream, English-language publications were exceptions, having a Mexican American in such a prominent role was inspiring to young Latinas/os seeking to enter the field. Some of those who went on to found CCNMA and NAHJ said they considered Salazar a role model in their early careers. His late-career shift toward criticism of what he saw as an insufficient coverage of Mexican Americans gave his visibility a new meaning. Salazar was an example of an experienced, prolific reporter who was able to engage critically with journalistic norms, speaking on behalf of community that was otherwise invisible. He was eventually memorialized by CCNMA, when the organization's main journalism awards were named after him.[147]

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146. Ibid.

147. This is not the only journalism award named after Salazar. UnidosUS (formerly the National Council for La Raza) has also awarded the Ruben Salazar Award for Communications to media and public affairs professionals who have devoted their careers to highlighting Latinos/as and Latino issues. Raul Yzaguirre, "Journalists Remember Ruben Salazar" *USA Today* (2014, April 6). Retrieved from: https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2014/04/06/ruben-salazar-hispanics-mexican-america-column/7270091/.

The Blowouts and Moratorium, as the most visible acts of protest against the discrimination of Mexican Americans, were also part of the convulsed social climate that brought issues of race and ethnicity to the forefront of public debate in the second half of the sixties. Just like the American Society of Newspaper Editors and its member publications moved to respond to the episodes of unrest that impacted several cities in the US in the mid to late sixties with a series of initiatives to promote inclusion,[148] media companies in Los Angeles pursued their own efforts to bring in journalists of color, but with the added visibility of Chicanos as the largest "minority" group. In the years leading up to the foundation of CCNMA, several television stations and the Los Angeles Times had been actively recruiting Mexican Americans to support their coverage of their community. This was a deliberate project to have at least one Latino journalist in their ranks.

Two CCNMA members recalled being recruited to local television stations at the turn of the decade. One of them was Frank Cruz, the former Lincoln High teacher. By 1970, Cruz, a history professor at California State University, Long Beach, had some connections to the local media and on-screen experience. In 1969, he was recruited to host and act as one of the expert sources in *Chicano*, an award-winning documentary series broadcast by NBC. The series presented different

148. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the ASNE and other organizations started debating the implementation of diversity initiatives in the aftermath of the Kerner Commission report. Even though the biggest decisions would not come until the late seventies, the ball was already rolling through the previous decade. For more, see Mellinger, *Chasing Newsroom Diversity*.

topics related to Mexican American history and culture, a topic that had been rarely addressed on television until then.[149]

> The news director of ABC Channel 7 saw it, and he called my office at Long Beach State University. He said, "Mr. Cruz, would you be interested in news?" and I said "Sir, I've never taken a journalism course in my life. I'm an academic, I'm a historian, I teach history." And he said "Well […] you know, why don't you come in and talk to me in downtown Los Angeles at ABC headquarters about journalism?" So I went in and, you know, I've always had a very entrepreneurial spirit that I learned from my mom…
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> […]
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> …He said, "You know, we want to go after the Hispanic demographic here in the Los Angeles area." He said, "You speak the language. I saw some of the subject matters that you did on that NBC series on the Mexican War and on immigration, the movements back and forth, and that's what I would like you to do here…"[150]

Henry Alfaro was another CCNMA founder who was "poached" from a different professional field during this hiring spurt. He went from advertising and PR to a reporting job at another of Los Angeles' stations roughly at the same time—and he was also recruited specifically as a Mexican American journalist. It should be noted that both Cruz and Alfaro had been in their respective fields for several years, and neither attempted to go for a journalism career right after college. Alfaro recalled, from the time he was recruited into KNBC:

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149. Jamie Martinez Wood, *Latino Writers and Journalists* (New York: Infobase, 2007), 62.

150. Cruz interview.

> Anyway, in 1970, I guess it was… I got a call from a friend of mine that said he was over at Channel 7. They were looking for a Mexican American reporter […] So as a first time I've ever been offered a job because of my nationality, so I told my wife "Hey I want to go, give it a try" and I'll be the first to know if I'm making it or not and because I don't want to be a token Mexican for anyone…[151]

The creation of CCNMA

By 1972, several major news outlets in the Los Angeles metropolitan area employed at least one Mexican American journalist to work in various positions. Frank del Olmo and George Ramos were reporters at the *Los Angeles Times*, while Henry Alfaro, Frank Cruz, Bob Navarro and Joe Garcia had positions in the different local television newsrooms. Many of them came into their jobs in the late 1960s, in what Frank Cruz described as an active effort by local media to recruit Mexican American journalists. This case as a response to the activism that had engulfed the city at the turn of the decade, in a sense a local version of the reactions to the Kerner report.[152] There were also clusters of Latinx professionals producing content for the Spanish-language media based in the city, most notably for *La Opinión*, the largest and best-known Spanish newspaper in the United States, and

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151. Henry Alfaro, Skype interview by Vinicio Sinta, March 14, 2018, Voces Oral History Project, Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries.

152. The timing and manner in which these hires were made is reminiscent of the "riot hires" of the mid-to-late sixties, when an unprecedented number of African American journalists were added to newsrooms in national publications and in cities with substantial Black populations.

for KMEX, the station that would go on to become a flagship station of Spanish International Network, now Univision.

This unprecedented level of representation in local media, at least compared to the almost total exclusion of years prior, was still no panacea. Mexican American journalists continued to feel both hyper-visible and condescended to in their roles as professionals. In sorting workplace politics as members of an ethnic (and in some cases, language) minority, seasoned and new reporters alike found themselves having to negotiate the advantages of being insiders in a culture that was impenetrable for Anglo journalists while avoiding being pigeonholed as single-issue writers. They were trying to avoid being trapped in the "taco beat."[153]

Partly by virtue of being a very small and very new community, it was easy for Latino journalists to find each other in Los Angeles. And eventually, some Mexican American reporters started to gather periodically to discuss the everyday happenings and vent their frustrations. After convening for the first few times, the first headquarters of sorts was secured: the office of civil rights attorney Herman Sillas on Third Street, easily accessible to journalists who worked around downtown Los Angeles. By this point, Sillas had already cemented a prominent role in Chicano activism. He represented teacher-activist Sal Castro in the lawsuit to

153. This was a recurrent claim in several of my interviews with NAHJ founders. The specific term "taco beat" emerged multiple times. Maclovio Perez, video interview by Vinicio Sinta, Corpus Christi, TX, April 14, 2017, Voces Oral History Project, Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries.

reinstate his job after the East L.A. School Walkouts of 1968.[154] Frank Cruz, one of the founders of CCNMA and a historian-cum-reporter, was a teacher at Lincoln High School the time of the walkouts, and met Sillas after being summoned a one of Sal Castro's character witnesses.

Initially, these meetings were informal, little more than an opportunity to discuss the goings on of the industry and to share advice on how to overcome obstacles inherent to their position as minorities. Frank Cruz, who in a matter of five years went from high school teacher to college instructor and eventually a reporter for KABC-TV, said that the field, while more inclusive than ever before, was still largely closed. As hiring practices were largely guided by preexisting social and professional relationships, members of underrepresented groups were at a disadvantage when it came to social support or mentoring opportunities. For the newspapers and stations doing the hiring, working with Mexican American journalists was also breaking new ground, and there were no structures in place to support their professional development.

> …Each news department had its own set of obstacles and hurdles. You got to remember the news departments up to that time were very closed environments, if you will. You joined a union and then you brought your cousin in as an editor, a cameraman, as a sound person… It was, you know… you brought people in that you knew, that were relatives and so forth. And you have to remember at the time they thought they knew who their demographics were. That's who they wrote news for or shop news for… For the audiences that they felt that they were catering to.[155]

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154. Frank Cruz, phone interview by Vinicio Sinta, April 15, 2018, Voces Oral History Project, Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries.

155. Ibid.

While the spurt of Mexican American hires can be seen as evidence of the interest of Los Angeles media management's interest in incorporating new voices to their coverage, the reality on the ground was not as rosy. As newcomers to the field, and as the only Chicanos in their respective companies, newly minted journalists like Cruz, Henry Alfaro and those who followed them had to deal with a newsroom culture that habitually put them on the defensive. Ironically, although they were often hired explicitly to cover the Latino community in Los Angeles, they were often put in the position of having to justify their coverage of certain issues, or in the case of broadcast journalist, had to work with staff who did not feel comfortable working in Mexican American communities. In addition to providing an escape valve for the everyday frustrations and tribulations of Chicano journalists, the initial meetings of the group that would go on to become CCNMA resulted in the development of a communal "brain trust." Participants would strategize about how to sensitize their colleagues and superiors about the relevance of covering the precarious position of many Latinos in education, politics and health. In that way, they acted as ambassadors of the community, according to Cruz.

> Prior to 1971 the coverage was, you know, aimed at a different demographic. They all thought that, you know, the majority of the people were white, they were Anglo Saxon, they lived in the west side of Los Angeles and that was the important part… And we would try to spin it and say "Look, there's people out in the other part of town who, you know, are building buildings, they're involved in the economy, you know… They're, you know, providing services at the hospitals, at the hotels, at the restaurants. They're building your homes. Construction is going on, take a look at that." So it was a matter of educating in that sense. It wasn't easy, trust me.[156]

156. Ibid.

CCNMA comes into being

The details on how Chicano journalists took the step from informal community to an incorporated, non-profit organization with an active agenda are fuzzy, and the few available public records date to the late seventies, when the organization was already looking back on its origins. Several versions gleaned from interviews and the organization's documents identifies more or less the same inaugural set of members: Frank del Olmo, George Ramos and Frank Sotomayor from *Los Angeles Times*; Henry Alfaro from KNBC-TV; Joe Garcia from KTLA-TV; Bob Navarro from KNXT-TV; Frank Cruz from KABC-TV; Joe Ramirez from KNBC-TV and Guillermo Restrepo from KMEX-TV, the flagship station of Spanish International Network (now Univision).

In 1972, the group was institutionalized and incorporated as a non-profit in the state of California. This process was, again, achieved in part through the support of attorney Herman Sillas, who assisted in the drafting of the bylaws. This step marked the first transition from a "club" to an organization with a concrete action agenda. According to Frank Cruz, who acted as the main link between Sillas and the rest of the group, the lore of the organization's origins as "a group of reporters having beer" after work came from having to wait for him to unlock the office for them to go inside. This memory, however, also has gender connotations; for the first years, the group that founded and composed CCNMA was exclusively male. The original name of the organization was, after all the California Chicano *News Men*

Association. (It was only changed until later, after the addition of its first two women members.)[157]

Even after CCNMA was incorporated, it took some more years to become a full, working organization. With a membership composed of full-time reporters and editors, it was notably difficult to organize more than periodic meetings to discuss current issues in the field. Funding was also obtained in a piecemeal fashion: Alfaro recalled having to chip in for early scholarship funds; the other early supporters were each member's employers, with the *Los Angeles Times* and its associated foundations among the primary funders.[158] Cruz recalled that the first serious program of activities—fundraising and awarding of scholarships to prospective Latino journalists—did not really start until CCNMA had its first permanent staff member: Andrea Cano, the first executive director.[159]

By the time Estela Lopez joined the organization, reporters like Henry Alfaro and Frank Cruz were already well known in Los Angeles media. Lopez, who entered the field after interning at KNBC and later moved to KABC after getting a tip from

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157. Estela Lopez, video interview by Vinicio Sinta, Los Angeles, CA, March 14, 2017, Voces Oral History Project, Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries.

158. Funding request for Times Mirror Foundation, undated (1994?), Box 122, Frank del Olmo Collection, Ovatt Library, California State University, Northridge. CCNMA documents from the nineties also allude to a longstanding working relationship with the *Los Angeles Times* top management.

See also: Felix Gutierrez, video interview by Vinicio Sinta, South Pasadena, CA, April 3, 2017, Voces Oral History Project, Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries.

159. Cruz interview.

Alfaro, recalled attending being star-struck first CCNMA meetings. She had seen them on television, as the few faces of Mexican Americans on news, and was now, as a fledging professional, sharing a platform with the pioneers.

Consolidation

In the late seventies, CCNMA received an infusion of funds through a major grant—the largest gift to date—and expanded its network through its coverage region (Southern California) and beyond. This transition took the organization from its initial status as a network and forum for Hispanic media professionals to a more formal status. And while CCNMA had already been a legitimate, "official" entity while it already bylaws and rules for years, it was at this point that it started looking outward and trying to intervene directly on the field through a series of activities that sought to recruit more Latinas/os into media professions.

One major step in this process was the enlistment of Felix Gutierrez, then a young-Los Angeles based journalism educator, into the fold. Gutierrez was the son of a *Californio*[160] family of media owners and professionals and was trained in journalism; he got a bachelor's degree in the field at Los Angeles State University, now California State University, Los Angeles, followed by a master's degree in the same field at Northwestern University. In spite of his family connection to the field

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160. Much like *Tejano* and *Nuevomexicano*, the term *Californio* is employed to refer to the Hispanic families that lived in what is now California before the state of Alta California was transferred from Mexico to the United States in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. See: Leonard Pitt, *Decline of the Californios: A Social History of the Spanish-Speaking Californians, 1846-1890* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), 26. Otis Singletary, *The Mexican War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

and his accomplishments as a scholastic journalist—he had been an award-winning editor of *The College Times*, the student newspaper at Los Angeles State—Gutierrez grew frustrated by years of unsuccessful job searches and decided to become an educator.[161]

In 1976, he earned a doctorate in mass communication at Stanford, where he met and worked alongside Jorge Reyna Schement, from Texas. At the time of the emergence and consolidation of CCNMA, Gutierrez and Schement were among the very first Mexican American and Latino scholars who went for doctoral degrees in communication, and in later years went on to produce some of the foundational writings in what eventually has become Latino Media Studies.

Gutierrez's intense interest in pursuing a career in media was complemented, or even based on, a strong drive for social justice. Like many journalism pioneers who started their careers in the sixties and seventies, Gutierrez came of age in an age of heightened activism and had links to the Chicano movement. He knew Rubén Salazar and was connected to the circle that the veteran journalist had been working on to create a proto-CCNMA of sorts.[162] While in Stanford, he was involved in a series of interventions by mass communication students who oriented the farmworker's movement in their outreach activities,

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161. Gutierrez interview.

162. In an interview for NAHJ founder Juan Gonzalez at *Democracy Now*, Gutierrez talked in depth about his relationship with Salazar. See: "Slain Latino Journalist Rubén Salazar, Killed 40 Years Ago in Police Attack, Remembered as Champion of Chicano Rights," *Democracy Now*. (2010, August 31). Retrieved from: https://www.democracynow.org/2010/8/31/slain_latino_journalist_ruben_salazar_killed.

including acting as copywriters and spokespeople. At one point, he was part of a group of Stanford students and faculty who got directly involved in organizing against a bill proposed by the State of California that would have curbed the delivery of political propaganda into residential mailboxes. At that time, farmworker's groups relied heavily on those materials for their campaigning efforts.[163]

A full-time educator by the late seventies, Gutierrez was teaching at California State University, Northridge, where one day he was visited by Frank del Olmo. Del Olmo was by then interested in ramping up the educational offerings at CCNMA, and thought that Gutierrez, at the time one of very few Mexican American communication faculty at the college level, could provide the pedagogical expertise to develop a program. After that meeting, Gutierrez started joining the periodic CCNMA meetings and helped build the organization's educational outreach, which included workshops and talks to young Latina/o students. As an educator, however, he was not allowed to become a voting member, a right only provided to active journalists.[164]

A "template" for journalism diversity

In the years that followed, the organization came into its own as a major hub for Latino and other minority journalists in California. After several years working

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163. Norma Sosa, video interview by Vinicio Sinta, Ontario, CA, March 10, 2017, Voces Oral History Project, Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries.

164. Gutierrez interview.

with a barebones staff,[165] in 1978 CCNMA obtained its first major grant, amounting to more than $50,000 from the Gannett Foundation.[166] These funds allowed the fledging group to hire Felix Gutierrez as a full-time executive director and expand their program of activities.

This infusion of funds was transformational to the organization. In addition to a yearly banquet that raised money for college scholarships, the organization was able to start new programs—some of them the first of kind for US Latino journalists.[167] By the turn of the decade, the organization had a telephone job bank, a periodic newsletter that alerted members of job and professional development opportunities and the Job Opportunities Conference (JOC), a recurring job fair that attracted recruiters from national publications who were interested in recruiting journalists of color.[168]

These activities expanded the reach and awareness of CCNMA beyond Los Angeles. A number of local chapters were eventually started in other parts of

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165. Gutierrez interview. After a few years, Andrea Cano went from first full time executive director to unpaid volunteer, and eventually left the organization in 1977.

166. Gerald Sass, video interview by Vinicio Sinta, Marana, AZ, March 18, 2017, Voces Oral History Project, Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries. A key link between CCNMA and the philanthropic arm of national news media was Frank Sotomayor, an editor at the *Los Angeles Times* who was both an early member of the California Chicano organization and a participant in some of the precursors to the Maynard Institute.

167. Moran interview.

168. Frank Cota-Robles Newton, video interview by Vinicio Sinta, Chula Vista, CA, January 10, 2017, Voces Oral History Project, Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries.

California, and bridges were established with nascent organizations created by African American and Asian American media workers, as well as to groups created by Latinos in other media professions.[169] The capital—economic and social—of the organization was on the up-and-up, and placed it in a prime position to become the epicenter of the movement toward a national Latino organization.

169. Alaniz interview. Rodriguez interview.

Chapter 6

The Formation of NAHJ

> "The cork is primed on the bottled-up talent of *Hispanoamericano* journalists. Like champagne relegated for years to the cellar, it's going to explode across the face of the nation – to capture recognition long denied… To chart its own course… and, most probably, to set new professional standards for non-Hispanic reporters and editors, as well as Hispanic ones…"[170]

In the early eighties, a group of Latino journalists from around the United States brought the template that Chicano journalists had implemented in California to the national stage. In two years, a network of media professionals from all over the United States came together in the first official conferences for Latino journalists in 1982. This planted the seed for months of deliberations that led the nascent organization to become officially incorporated.

Having a national presence represented an exponential leap in the visibility of organized Latino journalists in the struggle for better. It brought forth a unified voice, inclusive of Cuban Americans, Puerto Ricans and other Latino national origin groups that were not as visible in the areas served by existing regional organizations. At the same time, the establishment of the headquarters in the nation's capital brought the interests of Latino journalists much closer to the

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170. Charlie Ericksen and Ruben Treviso, "Hispanic Journalists Make Their Move," undated manuscript for *Nuestro*. Voces Oral History Project, Folder 702.

centers of political, cultural and economic power in the East Coast. This process extended the normalization of a pan-ethnic, national notion of *Latinidad* to the entire country, and brought the representation of Hispanic journalists to the same position as their African American and Asian American counterparts.[171]

The greater complexity of the emerging organization was not without its difficulties. As the nascent group expanded to include different professional profiles and a variety of experiences, the internal debates over ethnic and professional identity were vibrant, sometimes contentious. While stability was eventually reached in most of these issues, these disagreements sometimes resulted in breaks and crises that went on to define how the organization presented itself and journalism in its first five years of history.

This chapter provides an account of the formation of NAHJ, primarily through the reminiscences of its founders and members of the first boards of directors. The recollections of informants point to several key issues that arose in the formation of NAHJ, as the organization took shape. The narrative starts with the 1982 National Hispanic Media Conference in San Diego. Felix Gutierrez and other former and current CCNMA members, with the support of the Gannett Foundation, were given the task of assembling a task force of professionals from across the US to design a national organization. This group, called the Ad Hoc Committee for the Formation of a National Association of Hispanic Journalists convened a series of meetings in different American cities to gather insights on the needs of Latino

171. Native American journalists also formed an equivalent organization of their own in 1984: the Native American Journalists Association (NAJA).

media workers from different contexts. The process culminated in the incorporation of NAHJ in Los Angeles in 1984, which was celebrated at the organization's first formal conference in Washington, DC on April of that year.

A Constellation of Latino Journalist Organizations

"Going national"

The formation of NAHJ was aided by several influences, both from within the existing CCNMA infrastructure in Southern California as well as from elsewhere in the country and in the broader journalism field. The "seed" was the expertise of CCNMA, an organization that in 10 years had shown a way to build a self-sustaining structure and attract the attention and interest of leaders in the media. East of the Colorado River,[172] the growing ranks of Latino journalists started to create their own organizations. Closer to the centers of capital in the journalistic field, in Washington, DC, the Gannett Foundation and the Hispanic Link News Service led by veteran journalist Charlie Ericksen had the national vision and the rolodex that eluded the more parochial origins of CCNMA.

As CCNMA grew and consolidated its presence in Southern California in the late seventies and smaller groups emerged in other major markets, the number and size of diversity and inclusion initiatives across the United States grew with the support of the major industry organizations, most notably ASNE,[173] as well as

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172. Newton interview. This geographical reference alludes to a resolution passed by CCNMA, which according to Frank Newton banned the use of the organization's resources in any area "east of the Colorado River."

173. ASNE created its first Committee on Diversity in 1977 and in 1978 released its first mission statement for inclusion, including the first stated goal of achieving parity with US demographics by 2000.

entities from the philanthropic wing like the Maynard Institute. At this point, however, the National Association of Black Journalists stood alone as the only organization of journalists of color, and there were few explicit allusions to other definitions of inclusion and diversity beyond the Black/White divide, which was closer to the reality of most leaders in the field, especially at the national level.[174] One informant remembered the exclusion of Latino (and other non-African American) perspectives in such an event, organized by the Gannett Foundation in Chicago:

> So I was the one Hispanic, and three Asian Americans, and then there were about 20 African Americans. So after this thing is over, and there's panel discussions, you know… People are trying to wrap their heads around this… Lots of editors… Then the African American journalists got together, and they were kind of, I don't know, I remember this being like some kind of room, they were all sitting and they were all kind of talking to each other and the Asian Americans journalists and myself were kind of on the outskirts of this. They're talking about "We need to do [this]…" and "We need to do [that]…" and I said, "Well, how about us?" One of them turned around and said, "What about you?" And I said, "We're not African American," and they said, "Go start your own organization." It made me really angry at the time, but after I got over being angry I realized he was right. We had to start our own organization, so the NAHJ thing kind of goes back to that.[175]

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174. Up until 1978, when the first census of journalists of color was conducted, the number of Latina/o journalists was virtually negligible, and the notion of a national Latino minority was not widespread. It is not hard to assume that for many leaders in American journalism any discussion about inclusion centered on African Americans in majority-Anglo newsrooms.

175. Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, video interview by Vinicio Sinta, Austin, TX, January 6, 2017, Voces Oral History Project, Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries.

By this point, CCNMA was already consolidated in its position as the largest and most influential organization of Latina/o journalists in the nation perfected the "template" for build by his predecessors in previous years. Through the support of Gerald Sass, Vice President of Educational Initiatives for the Gannett Foundation, they also had secured access to funding and other intangible resources from one of the largest newspaper chains in the United States. The organization had reached a degree of stability that allowed it to extend its influence beyond Los Angeles and the other California markets in California with CCNMA chapters.

In the early eighties, Latino media professionals across the country started coalescing into local organizations. These smaller units reflect a microcosm of the diversity of experiences that would find a platform in the future national association.[176] They varied in size and membership—some grouped journalists of color, like the Concerned Media Professionals in Tucson[177] and the New Mexico

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176. Hispanic Media Organizations nationwide in December 1982, Voces Oral History Project, Folder 1017. According to a document provided by Frank Newton, in 1982, the following organizations were active and in contact with each other. Several were led by future founders of NAHJ: Asociación de Periodistas Puertorriqueños de Nueva York, Asociación de Periodistas y Locutores Interamericanos (APLI, Chicago), Association of Latin Americans in Broadcasting (Boston), Bay Area Latino Media Association (BALMA, San Francisco), California Association of Latinos in Broadcasting (CALIB, Los Angeles), Central California Chicano Media Association (Fresno), Colegio Nacional de Periodistas de Cuba (Miami), Concerned Media Professionals (Tucson), Hispanic Public Affairs Association (District of Columbia), Hispanic Media Association of Washington, DC, Hispanics in Communication (New York), the New Mexico Minority Media Association (Albuquerque), Professional Organization of Mexican Americans in Communication (POMAC, El Paso) and the Network of Hispanic Communicators (TECLA, Dallas).

177. Auslander interview.

Minority Media Association, while others were aimed specifically at a single national origin group, like the Asociación de Periodistas Puertorriqueños de Nueva York. Some were exclusively for working journalists, while others included a variety of communication professions, like California Latinos in Broadcasting (CALIB) and the Hispanic Public Affairs Association. And while most of these new entities were concentrated in the US Southwest, where Mexican Americans made a disproportionate segment of the target population, there were also fledging groups of Puerto Rican and Cuban American journalists, many of whom were comprised primarily of professionals who had started their careers overseas. According to Newton's testimonial and several written accounts of the formation of NAHJ, the emergence of local groups outside of California presented a first opportunity to build a national network.[178]

The budding network of organizations provided some evidence that there was a growing number of Latino journalists working in mainstream media, and that they were distributed beyond the regions of the country with the largest Latino populations. On the other hand, the growth of collaborative efforts between these groups planted the seed that a national organization was possible. These links facilitated the development of initiatives that eventually covered the entire country, starting with the first national gatherings of Latino journalists that took place in 1982.

Reunión in San Diego

Getting a multi-ethnic group of Latino journalists from all corners of the US under the same roof (twice) in 1982 represented an exponential leap forward in the development of the proto-NAHJ community. With support from Gerald Sass and seed money from the Gannett Foundation, Latino journalist-organizers throughout the US put together two events in 1982. The first, and smaller convention was a National Spanish-language Media Conference hosted at the University of California, Los Angeles campus in August 20 and 21 of 1982. The second, and more momentous, was the first National Hispanic Media Conference, which took place at the Town and Country Hotel in San Diego in December 2-4, 1982.

Both events were predecessors of sorts of the yearly NAHJ conferences that have taken place since 1984, and the process through which they were conceived and assembled—was a test run of the deliberations that led to the creation of the national organization two years later. After a February 6, 1982, conclave attended by representatives from the existing local groups,[179] two committees led by CCNMA leaders were assembled: Frank del Olmo and Frank Newton were given the task of chairing and coordinating the larger, "mainstream," conference in San Diego, while Rafael Prieto and Cecilia Alvear from *La Opinión* and CBS, respectively, were tasked with planning the Spanish-language journalism conference to take place in the

179. "The 1st Annual National Hispanic Media Conference" (undated memo), Voces Oral History Project, Box 702, Folder 83.

summer.[180] About a third of the organizers, plus coordinator Frank Newton, went on to join the planning committee for NAHJ itself.[181]

According to an undated manuscript on the emerging coalition prepared by Charlie Ericksen and Rubén Treviso of Hispanic Link News Service for *Nuestro* magazine, the planning committee tailored the format and contents of the event to be inclusive of other Latino communities beyond Mexican Americans. Providing representation to as broad possible a group was a priority from the very beginning. Wrote Ericksen and Treviso: "one concern of the planning body was to ensure that Hispanic journalists representing as many geographical areas and national-origin groups as possible be given significant roles in the conference itself."[182]

Minutes from the planning stage provide a window into the central concerns of Latino journalists in this early stage of the process of "going national." Notes from an April, 24, 1982 meeting at the University of Southern California in Los

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180. Salinas interview. According to Maria Elena Salinas, who served in the CCNMA "Spanish-Language Committee" with Rafael Prieto, the Spanish conference was partly a result of Prieto's lobbying to have an exclusive event. In later years, NAHJ merged both events into a single yearly convention.

181. "The 1st National Hispanic Media Conference." The full committee comprised: Edith Auslander (University of Arizona, Tucson), Patricia Benton (*Arizona Daily Star*, Phoenix), Ray Chavez (California State University, San Jose), Alberto Dominguez (KFSN, Fresno), Charlie Ericksen (Hispanic Link, Washington, DC), Eloise Gonzalez (CCNMA, Los Angeles), Paula Maes (KOB-TV, Albuquerque), Henry Mendoza (KABC-TV, Los Angeles), Julio Moran (*Los Angeles Times*), Diane Navarrette (KERA-TV, Dallas), Jesus Rangel (*San Diego Union*), Maggie Rivas (*Boston Globe*), Bert Salazar (POMAC, El Paso), Phil Sisneros (KOB-FM, Albuquerque), Frank Sotomayor (*Los Angeles Times*), Sal Valdez (KESS-AM, Fort Worth) and Manuel Valencia (*Sacramento Bee*).

182. "Hispanic Journalists Make Their Move."

Angeles show participants anticipating the conference becoming a yearly occurrence, pitching ideas for content and discussing the event's scope. The interests of participants in the planning committee revolved around two content axes, which eventually became the two main content "streams." Some attendees focused on definitional, identity-based aspects. This was one of the first explicit references to the need of defining what "Hispanic," "national" and "journalism" meant for the purposes of the event. Some attendees thought a main focus of the conference would be to highlight Latino journalists across the country as a way of telling the media "establishment"—as Ericksen put it in his *Nuestro* piece—that Hispanic journalists were demanding a voice in newsroom policies. In this line, Maggie Rivas and Charlie Ericksen proposed devoting space to an examination of the history of Mexican Americans in journalism and a "definition of self," respectively. Frank del Olmo, who led the session as chair of the planning committee, brought up the issue of "being a respectable journalist and still a Latino." Rivas-Rodriguez and Jesus Rangel voiced their concern about devoting a disproportionate amount of attention and space to Chicanos over other groups.[183] Others gave priority to the "sharpening of professional skills," another mainstay of NAHJ programming. As a consensus summary of the mission of the conference, Newton wrote that it objective would be "an annual meeting for Hispanics in the news media to promote professional development and mutual support and to

183. Minute for Planning Meeting for 1st National Hispanic Media Conference, April 24, 1982, Los Angeles. Voces Oral History Project, Box 702, Folder 83, 1.

foster greater awareness and understanding of Hispanic media professionals' identity and common concerns."[184]

In line with the discussion on the main objectives for the event, the conference organizers divided the sessions (called "workshops" in the minute) in "skills" and "strategy" categories. The former provided practical skills for journalists, while the second half covered broader ground, with some sessions focused on identity, ethics, and organizing. The topics were assigned to each committee member, who were given the task of developing a statement on each field and proposing a speaker. In addition to the committee members, who each had expertise in many of these topics, the roster of proposed speakers also included academics like Felix Gutierrez and Jorge Schement, two pioneering scholars of Chicano and Latino news media.[185]

The December 1982 National Hispanic Media Conference was a momentous event in more than one way.[186] It was by far the largest convention of its type. While the estimates of 300 to 375 attendees, depending on the source, might seem

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184. Ibid, 2.

185. Ibid, 5.

186. There is little documentation about the Spanish-language conference in Los Angeles that preceded the "big" San Diego convention, aside from the name of its keynote speaker—Manuel Bustelo, publisher of *El Diario/La Prensa* (New York) and its relative success in terms of attendance. The committee got to organize a second standalone Spanish-language conference organizing the following year before its functions were folded into the standard NAHJ conventions. Some of its contents were also taken over by the yearly events of the National Association of Hispanic Publishers (NAHP), a sister organization.

trivial compared to future NAHJ conventions, this was unprecedented for Latino media professionals.[187]

The first National Hispanic Media Conference was a fertile ground for exchange and the development of an identity for the emerging community of practice. The conference's "Statement of Objectives" highlighted mutual support and cultural commonalities as its keystone:

> "The National Hispanic Media Conference is an annual meeting of Hispanics working in news and public affairs in order to promote professional development and mutual support, and to foster greater understanding of Hispanic news media professionals' special cultural identity, interests and concerns."[188]

The media workers in attendance had an opportunity to take part in sessions that discussed the history of their community and their position in the hierarchies of power in the field, as well as to strategize ways in which to increase their visibility. As a storytelling hub, the convention benefitted from the presence of Latino leaders with visibility at the national level: among the speakers were officials like Henry M. Rivera, the first Hispanic member of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and civil rights activists like Tony Bonilla, president of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) and Vilma S.

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187. "National Hispanic Media Conference Held in San Diego," *La Voz* (May 1983), 15. "Minute for Planning Meeting…," 7. In interviews, one informant recalled having up to 700 attendees.

188. "An Organizational Plan for the National Association of Hispanic Journalists," Voces Oral History Project, Box 702, Folder 83, 1.

Martinez, a former president of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF).

For many, if not most, attendees, this was their very first participation at an event that catered to Latino journalists and a milestone in their personal and professional trajectories. This was even more the case for those who were working out of cities that had negligible numbers of English-language Latino media professionals at the time, like Rivas in Boston and Juan Gonzalez in Philadelphia.

> "…It was really empowering to see that many journalists that looked like you and had a last name like you, and to a different degree had experiences like you (…) and who had some of the same issues in different communities. So, it was kind of, like, how much more obvious does it need to be? There is a critical mass here, and there is work that needs to get done, and we're the people that need to do that."[189]
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> "It was really exciting because, you know, when you're the only person in the entire city and then suddenly you see all of these folks, especially out in California… That was exciting. There were not that many people from New York at that first conference. There were only a few, and I think several of them were from *El Diario*, but there were lots of people from Texas and California and Arizona and so on…"[190]

Getting everyone under the same roof also led to the crystallization of the project of building a national association, as it allowed for the creation of bonds between professionals that had not been afforded a possibility to collaborate due to geographical isolation and cultural differences. Representatives from the media

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189. Rivas-Rodriguez interview.

190. González interview.

who were in attendance, like Gerald Sass from the Gannett Foundation, were reportedly so impressed by the event that it was also probably the best introduction to what later would become NAHJ.

A Bold Step Forward

There are several versions about the exact "moment" when the seed for a National Association of Hispanic Journalists was planted,[191] but they all revolve around the same decision makers and organizers: (1) Gerald Sass, the Vice President for Education at the Gannett Foundation, who had been supporting CCNMA since the granting of their first major grant in the mid-seventies and also

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191. The exact order of the events that led to the formation of NAHJ is complicated by several contradicting versions of how they unfolded, as well as different definitions of when exactly the idea was first pitched to the leaders. All the differing versions place the first discussions, preliminary meetings and the intervention of Gerald Sass between April 1982 and the spring of 1983, when the funding proposal for NAHJ was approved by the Gannett Foundation.

- Newton interview. Newton said that the topic was first addressed in a private conversation he had with Sass at a "local" CCNMA event that was attended by Ericksen. However,

- "NAHJ: X Years," brochure produced by the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, Voces Oral History Project Box 1015. A commemorative pamphlet produced by NAHJ for its 10th anniversary identified an event *during* the San Diego conference as the key moment when Sass and CCNMA leaders decided to move ahead with the formation process.

- "A Request for Financial Support by The California Chicano News Media Association On Behalf of the Ad Hoc Committee the National Association of Hispanic Journalists," proposal prepared by Frank Newton, March 4, 1983, Voces Oral History Project, Box 1017, Folder 1, 2. The language used in the proposal submitted to the Gannett Foundation to request a grant to form NAHJ suggests that the decision to form NAHJ had already been made well before the National Hispanic Media Conference.

had a key role in the development of NABJ and of the Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA); (2) Frank Newton, who had been highly active connecting local organizations as the executive director of CCNMA, and who coordinated Latino journalists from across the United States in putting together the 1982 National Hispanic Media Conference; (3) Charlie Ericksen, the editor of Hispanic Link News Service and founder of the Hispanic Media Association in Washington, DC, and (4) Henry Mendoza, an editor at KABC-TV, who was president of CCNMA at the time of the San Diego conference, and who ended up acting as a "bridge" between the leaders of the local Chicano organization in California and the budding national association.

According to Frank Newton, Sass was the first major proponent for holding a national conference for Hispanic journalists—and for the creation of a unified organization. The topic was first broached during one of the periodic CCNMA's Job Opportunities Conferences usually held at the University of Southern California. Sass, who at this point already had been supporting NABJ and the Asian American Journalists Association (AAJA), consulted Newton on the feasibility of developing a national counterpart to CCNMA. Newton initially turned Sass down, convinced that the CCNMA board would not accept the potential loss of influence that an overlapping national organization would imply. However, Charlie Ericksen, who was at the event, convinced Newton go back to Sass and take him up on the idea.[192]

192. Newton interview. Sass interview.

The only Anglo among the founders of NAHJ, Ericksen was by the eighties a seasoned writer and editor with very deep connections to the Latino-community in Washington, DC and elsewhere in the US. He had written about border and Mexican issues since his time as a reporter for the Los Angeles News Herald, and also had experience supporting young Latinas/os who pursued careers in the media through a long-running internship program at Hispanic Link and taking part in the formation of a Washington, DC equivalent to CCNMA.

Ericksen's career and position in Latino journalism gave him a unique scope and a platform the other working professionals did not have. He had worked in mainstream media in a variety of positions, took part in producing journalistic contents for a bilingual, national Latino audience and run his own editorial outfit. Ericksen devoted his career to Latino-oriented journalism, having assembled not only the first syndication service focused on Hispanic authors and issues, but also participating in the creation of the first organization for Latino media professionals in Washington, DC. He had a direct connection to Mexican American and Mexican American culture through his marriage to Sebastiana Mendoza, a native of the Mexican state of Oaxaca.

As a publisher, Ericksen was also afforded a degree of autonomy that most participants in these organizations, bounded by the tenets of journalistic professionalism and the whims of their employers, did not enjoy. By virtue of being based in Washington, DC and editing a syndication service that picked up contents from different regions of the United States, he also had a uniquely broad array of Latino contacts in different intellectual fields. He was responsible for bringing

awareness of the 1982 conference to journalists in the East Coast who had no contact with CCNMA prior to the event, and these efforts later contributed to the forming of a team of committed organizers.

Gannett's commitment

As with other contemporary initiatives and the Gannett's longstanding commitment to CCNMA, Sass was steadfast in his support to the initiative of a national organization. Two months after the San Diego conference, a new conclave of leaders of local organizations on February 5, 1983, resulted in the appointment of Henry Mendoza, a former president of CCNMA, to head what would become the "Ad Hoc Committee for the Formation of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists."[193] The main responsibility given to the Ad Hoc Committee was writing the new group's bylaws, essentially providing the emergent organization with its identity, core objectives and structure. As chair of the Ad Hoc Committee, Mendoza had as his first task the writing of a funding request to cover the expenses of the bylaws drafting process and the selection of the future committee members.

The text of the proposal, dated on March 4, 1983, presented Gannett with a brief overview of what was then the recent history of Latino media professional associations, remarking on the speed and breadth with which the impetus for creating organizations had spread. The proposal, at its essence a document produced by CCNMA, also played up its own role in generating the "movement" that

193. Frank Newton to Hispanic Public Affairs Association and Hispanic News Media Association, Washington DC, "Organizational Format for the 2nd National Hispanic Media Conference," March 25, 1983, Voces Oral History Project, Box 702, Folder 1.

was now being in the process of being institutionalized.[194] The proposal delineated a "National Organization Plan" with four points, as decided by Henry Mendoza and the local leaders present at the February 1983 meeting:

(1) "*Draft articles of incorporation, bylaws and related guidelines for a national organization.*" Mendoza pledged to appoint an Ad Hoc committee reflective of "the geographic and national origin diversity characteristic of the Hispanic population in the US" and to organize meetings in different American cities, presumably for the purpose of gathering information on the needs of media professionals in different locales.

(2) "*Strengthen existing Hispanic media groups and foster the creation of more groups.*" The proposal also requested funds that would be applied to promoting the creation of regional organizations across the US, by awarding grants matched with local fundraising. The text highlights the potential for growth in Denver, Sacramento and Philadelphia—representative of the potential for true national coverage.

(3) "*Organize the upcoming National Hispanic Media Conference*." The second national convention of Latino journalists, slated for April 1984 in Washington, DC, would provide a venue for the official foundation of NAHJ. After the first experience in San Diego, Frank Newton was designated the coordinator for the event.[195]

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194. "A Request for Financial Support…", 4.

195. Ibid, 2.

(4) "*Achieve national recognition by impacting the existing national professional media organizations*." The final item is not as clear as the previous, as it is not tied to any specific action items or funding needs. This is made explicit by the author's admission that there is no solid plan yet to achieve such a lofty goal. As a temporary solution, the proposal charges Frank Newton with establishing links with national professional organizations—although none are specified—to offer the names of Latino journalists who could contribute to the existing initiatives.[196]

According to a press release put out by the Gannett Foundation after the grant was approved and announced, the proposal was endorsed through letters of recommendation submitted by some of the local organizations who took part in the preliminary meetings, as well as from then director of the University of Southern California School of Journalism director Luther Luedtke.[197]

Gannett responded quickly to the request. A few days later, Gerald Sass and the Foundation president Eugene Dorsey had dinner with CCNMA leaders at La Fonda on March 10—only six days after the original submission. By then, a letter from Sass had all but assured Frank Newton that the Ad Hoc Committee would be offered $50,000 in seed funds, provided that they could pursue the four points outlined in the proposal.[198] In April 1 of the same year, the Gannett Foundation put

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196. Ibid, 3.

197. CCNMA grant announcement, press release by the Gannett Foundation, April 1, 1983, Box 702, Folder 1, Voces Oral History Project, 2.

out a release announcing the grant and introducing the prospective organization. This, in turn, set in motion the formation process.

Going national

Work on the Ad Hoc Committee started immediately. By mid-April, Henry Mendoza had already assembled the majority of the eventual planning team, with an eye on gathering perspectives—and volunteers—from regions that had smaller populations of Latino journalists.[199] The committee was broad and fairly diverse in terms of geography and ethnic origin, although it still had a heavy presence from the West Coast, given the leading role of CCNMA.

Some of the members of the committee outside of California were contacted based on the personal and professional networks of the leaders. Others entered the orbit of the group's leaders during the San Diego conference. Some regions were harder to represent, given the geographic fragmentation of Latino communities in the eighties. Finding Latino professionals to take the role of organizing their peers in the Midwest and New England were particularly difficult endeavors, for example, and those regions were sparsely represented in the early years of the organization. Another key decision made when integrating the committee was the consideration of Spanish-speaking Puerto Rico as a constitutive part of the US Latino community.[200]

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198. Gerald Sass to Frank Newton, letter, March 15, 1983, Box 702, Folder 1, Voces Oral History Project.

199. "A National Hispanic Media Association," press release from CCNMA, April 21, 1983, Box 702, Folder 1, Voces Oral History Project.

200. Ericksen interview.

In addition to Henry Mendoza and Charlie Ericksen, mentioned above, the Ad Hoc Committee included three other print journalists from English-language publications: Juan González, a reporter and columnist with the *Philadelphia Daily News* of Puerto Rican descent; Guillermo Martínez, a Cuban American bilingual reporter and editor at the *Miami Herald* and Norma Sosa, a Mexican American reporter and editor from Texas who at the time worked at the *Chicago Sun-Times*. For Spanish-language media, the committee included Gustavo Godoy and Maria Elena Salinas, at the time news editor and anchor from Spanish International Network and KMEX, respectively, as well as Jesús Dávila, a reporter for *El Diario/La Prensa* in Manhattan. The only member who worked in news gathering for English-language broadcasting aside from Mendoza was Maggie Rivas, who by this point was a reporter at WFAA-TV, in Dallas. Juan Manuel García Passalacqua, the one representative of Puerto Rico, was a political analyst at the *San Juan Star*.

The founding committee for NAHJ had a relatively high proportion of members who worked in public affairs or other business endeavors different from news gathering; this speaks to the broader mission of the original National Hispanic Media Conference. Three members were public affairs executives for broadcasting companies: Jay Rodriguez was a West Coast Vice President for Public Affairs at NBC, while Bob Alaniz and Paula Maes handled public affairs for two local television stations—KCBS-TV in Los Angeles and KOB-TV in Albuquerque. Edith Sayre Auslander was a Mexican American professor of journalism at the University of Arizona; previously, she had been a reporter and human resources executive for

various Tucson publications, including Gannett's *Tucson Citizen*.[201] Finally, Frank Gomez was an executive with International Business Communications, a public relations office based in Washington, DC, and former officer at the United States Information Agency.

In addition to representing a very deliberate attempt at capturing ethnic, geographical and professional diversity of Latinos as understood in the early eighties,[202] the designation of the Ad Hoc committee was also strategic in some regards. Some members, particularly those who did not work as full-time journalists had technical skills or a power position that aided in the process of forming NAHJ. For example, *San Juan Star* political analyst Juan Manuel García Passalacqua, an attorney assisted the rest of the committee in reviewing the organization's articles of incorporation.[203] Public affairs and PR executives tended to have extensive networks in the business side of the media industry and non-profit community, a key asset for fundraising.[204] Jay Rodriguez, who at the time was probably the NAHJ founder with the highest ranking position at his place of

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201. Auslander interview. In a reversal of the role played in organizations like NAHJ, Auslander represented Gannett at events organized by Latino civil rights organizations like LULAC and recruited for the company at NABJ conventions.

202. From the vantage point of 2018, the lack of representation for journalists of Dominican, Salvadoran, Guatemalan and other Caribbean and Central American origins is notable. A Dominican journalist, Antonio Espinal, was not in the founding committee, but was elected to serve in the first board of directors. Most of the formation process preceded the influx of asylum seekers produced by civil war and the waves of violence that engulfed Central America starting in the eighties.

203. Newton interview.

204. For example, Frank Gomez contributed to the sponsorship of Philip Morris.

employment, had experience working with top management outside of the newsroom.

Given the distribution of Latino communities in the US, getting a broadly diverse—if not strictly representative—array of national origins came along with geographic inclusion. All but one of the members of the founding committee were either Mexican American (9), Puerto Rican (3) or Cuban American (2).

The one exception, as mentioned previously was Charlie Ericksen, the only Anglo founder of NAHJ. The potential dilemma of whether to open the founding committee—and voting membership—to someone who was not of Latin American origin was resolved fairly easily by giving Ericksen himself the task of writing what he referred to as the "magic sentence" in the bylaws that allowed him to be a member. In the end, Ericksen's history of involvement in Latino issues was given priority over a strict ethnic or racial essence.

> "…And I was an issue too, because I'm not Hispanic and yet they said so, that it just had to be an organization of Hispanics, period. So then they looked to me and said, "Well, OK, Charlie, you define Hispanic so that you're included," and that's what happened. I became the first Secretary because of, say, Hispanic Link, which was a real activist group, and writing columns about Hispanic issues and all that…"[205]

Travails across America

Led by Frank Newton, the founding committee conducted planning meetings in three cities with significant Latino populations: Denver, Miami and New York. In line with the strategy of building a national community of Latino journalists, this

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205. Ericksen interview.

format was devised to bring the process out of California. In each city, Newton organized receptions with local stakeholders—both from journalism and for the broader Hispanic community—to learn about their particular needs and the most pressing issues.[206]

Most of these meetings were fairly routine, with most of the time devoted to coming to a consensus on what would be the mission of the organization, what it would be called, and who could join and have a voice in it. For some members, this was a revelatory experience—sharing a mission with people with a similar, yet distinct cultural background, with whom there had not been significant contact before.

> "Remember one evening when we were in New York City and there were *Cubanos*, *Puertorriqueños*, there were *Mexicanos* there and we got to talking about the difference in accents. And we had a lot of fun with that, repeating the same sentence, all of us in our own ways. But I thought it was good because there was a little bit of, "Well, I don't know, I don't know many *Mexicanos*, many *Puertorriqueños*, I don't know many *Cubanos* or some whatever" and it was sort of getting to know each other and realizing that we were a group… That we were not apart or different just because the origin of our 'Latino-ism' was not from the same country."[207]

Yet it was not all harmonious all the time. Regionalism sometimes came to the forefront when delving outside of spaces dominated by the orthodoxy of journalistic norms and the Mexican American-dominant community in California. Henry Mendoza recalled one heated incident during the planning meeting held in New York, where CCNMA had never had a significant presence.

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206. Newton interview.

207. Auslander interview.

> I mean we had Puerto Ricans in New York telling us "Who are we?" I remember… I can't remember his name… He was a former light heavyweight champion of the world (…) I think he went to our meeting in New York. (…) He had a column in New York, he was a journalist, too. (…) He's standing at our forum and he's telling me: "Why are you here? We don't care about you?" and he was raising points that weren't issues, but it was all… I hate to put it [this way], kind of the whole notion of, you know, that was the East Coast game, so who are we from California?[208]

After two years of deliberations, NAHJ was officially established in April 1984. In its foundational documents, the organization pledged to accomplish five basic goals pertaining to the status of people of Latin American descent in American newsrooms, including to (1) support Latinas/os working in the news industry, (2) encourage the study of journalism and mass communication by Latinas/os, (3) promote the fair and accurate treatment of Latinas/os in the media, (4) further the employment of Latinas/os in the media and (5) foster a greater understanding of Latina/o cultural identity, interests and concerns.[209]

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208. Mendoza interview.

209. National Association of Hispanic Journalists, *X Años* (n.d.). Box 1015, Voces Oral History Project.

Chapter 7

Epilogue and Conclusion

> "The world that journalists have to deal with now, the career is so different… It's hard for me to make a meaningful comment, but I know the need is still there. The discrimination still goes on. There is still a sense that if you're a minority you're not a professional. And there isn't that respect that they really are entitled to hard to get. So the problems still exist, but the nature of the media has changed at a galactic level. It is so different now from 1985, 1988, that it's hard to make a comparison."[210]

The previous chapters provide an account of the context in which the formation of NAHJ took place, as well as a timeline of the events leading up to its incorporation in 1984. Using oral history interviews to compile the experiences and professional trajectories, I sketched a prosopography of the Latina and Latino journalists who laid the foundation for an organization that to this day remains the main platform for Hispanic news workers to have a unified voice. Their first-hand accounts of how the events unfolded and how individuals who lived through this period and who participated in these transformational events experienced them provides a window into the "structure of feeling" of a time in which the prevailing discourse on professionalism, representation and ethnicity were in a state flux in journalism, especially with regard to US Latinas/os and other groups outside of what was the Black/White binary.

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210. Newton interview.

To close this dissertation, this chapter provides an epilogue to the early history of NAHJ. While many of the founders and early leaders remained loosely connected to the organization, most stopped their involvement after the first five years. By 1990, there was a whole new cohort of board members running the organization as it solidified its structure and processes. Seeing NAHJ go through a change of the guard and break away from its early, grassroots origins was bittersweet. Others eventually returned to the fold and became leaders as the organization matured and underwent financial and organizational turmoil in the 2000s.

In addition to closing the circle, the chapter places some of the broader themes of this history in the context of the broader journalism studies literature, as well as in the history of US Latinos. The last part of the chapter lists the work that remains to be done—starting with the writing of a full history of NAHJ—and poses some questions for the next steps in a broader research project on journalist organizations and change.

Sharing a platform with Latino activists and other major "firsts" from other realms was also a generative experience, as the nascent organization came in the years following a broader wave of pan-ethnic organizations that emerged from the mid-sixties to the eighties.

> Maybe you can't [separate] the activism of activists versus journalists, and there's a real mix… There's a good, very important mix… activists played a major role in a lot of those early days. We would invite the president of LULAC, the president of these different groups to play leading roles in in

> getting the communities together and inviting [the] participation of people who wanted to wake up the Hispanic community.[211]

Departures and Breaks

The history of NAHJ transcends the years covered in this dissertation. The organization will reach its 35th anniversary in 2019, in the middle of major changes in its structure and a lively debate about its future. By now, multiple generations of media professionals have gone through the organization, each with its own approach to identity and organizing. The group has gone through periods of increased activity and survived severe financial and structural crises, but up to now has maintained a permanent staff.[212] The yearly conference and its associated awards and scholarships remain its most visible activities, although the organization also pursues actions in reaction to what the leadership deems to be inaccurate, negative portrayals of Latinas/os in the news, or to support Latina/o journalists who face extraordinary hardships due to layoffs or other calamities. These represent the largest gatherings of Latina/o news professionals, and a major bridge to connect with other fields, including academia.

As mentioned earlier, most of the members of the first cohort of planners and leaders at NAHJ stayed active in the organization for a relatively short period of time, with most stopping their involvement by 1990. In some cases, this was part of

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211. Ericksen interview.

212. Moran interview. As of 2017, NAHJ had vacated their permanent headquarters in Washington, DC, and had only a "virtual" office that could be used when meeting in person was necessary. The executive director at that time, Alberto Mendoza, was based in Los Angeles and support functions were handled by contractors or temp staff working out of their homes.

a general departure from the field, a testament to the high levels of attrition faced by journalists of color. Others went back to being rank-and-file members and followed different trajectories in the media and other public affairs occupations. Most continued to be advocates for Latinas/os in other capacities, including politics, activism/organizing and education, among other fields.

Yet others stopped participating because they felt the organization had gone in a direction different from what they had envisioned. The way informants interpreted their own departure from the organization (or in a few cases, their permanence and return) is revealing of how they perceive its continued success or lack thereof. Since most of the informants' participation in NAHJ was truncated by changes in their personal trajectories, their perception of how effective is in part shaped by how they experienced their time in the organization and how their career developed afterward. While the prevailing interpretation is one of personal satisfaction and a sense of pride being part of a larger project that helped pave the way for Hispanic journalists, there is also a sense that more could have been done, or that things could have been done differently.

> I think that the work in this area will never be completed. They'll always be working to making sure that minorities and women are better represented in every walk of life, whether it's about Congress if it's a seat in Congress, or it's an owner of a store or the owner of a radio station or it's that reporter and that. It will never be completed. The work will always be there.[213]
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> There was a time, you know, maybe about ten years ago at one of our scholarship banquets, when I said that my goal, my dream is that CCNMA never exist again… Because then it means that we've done our job, that there's no need for us to help identify and train young Latinos to go into the

213. Maes interview.

> business, that the industry is hiring us at levels that they should be, that stories are being reported accurately. That dream has not come true, so that's still the work that we need to do. The thing that we have done and NAHJ has done is that we have produced quality journalists.[214]

Informants generally spoke of the organization's genesis as a meaningful contribution to journalism and to the situation of US Latinas/os, while acknowledging that the end goal of achieving parity when they were involved and might not happen in their lifetime. The recurring theme when informants talked about closing their cycle at NAHJ was a sense that the job remains incomplete. The sense that "we could have achieved more" was expressed both by those who left early, and those who stayed on the board in different capacities for several years.

A key difference, however, is that those who stayed involved, or became officers after the first two or three boards were more specific in their critiques. After the initial period, when the processes were still falling into place, they were able to get a better assessment of the effectiveness of the organization. This was even more the case for those who got involved in regional leadership—as they had to act as mediators between rank-and-file members and the national directors. An exceptional case was that of Juan González, who distanced himself from NAHJ for years before becoming involved again in 2002, when he ran for president of the organization (and won). Antonio Espinal, a Dominican-born journalist who worked at several Spanish-language newspapers in the northeast, remembers being frustrated with what he perceived as a lack of action by the national leadership, and

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214. Moran interview.

left after several years working with one of the regional groups (the one covering New York and the Mid-Atlantic).[215]

Another factor that seems to have colored my informant's perception of the legacy of NAHJ is the perceived impact of generational change in how the organization evolved through the years. Consistent with the work on *conscientización* or "awareness-rising" in other professional fields,[216] the interviewees' interpretation of what came after their time tells a story of distancing from its more activist, community-oriented roots.

This is manifested in claims of the organization becoming "corporate," of future leaders and members being more oriented to career advancement than to the collective uplift of Latinas/os and as founder and future president Juan Gonzalez would put it in his book *News for All the People*, a shift to a more "technocratic orientation."[217]

> You know, our first few years as NAHJ board, we were all there because we wanted to build something. We really cared about the organization. We wanted to build something, and so […] there. And we didn't always agree, we fought, whatever else, but we were all doing it for the right reasons. I'm not sure that this board… that the board of NAHJ over the last several years had that same kind of commitments. I think more people are joining the board because they want to put on their resume… That they're more interested in "What can this do for me? How is it going to help my career?" rather than sacrificing and saying "Look, I've had a good career" or "I'm having a good career and now I want to give back… I'm going to give back by being on this

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215. Espinal interview.

216. For an example from education, see Luis Urrieta and Lina R. Benavidez, "Community commitment and activist scholarship: Chicana/o professors and the practice of consciousness," *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education* 6, no. 3 (2007), 222-236.

217. González and Torres, *News for All the People*.

> board and helping this organization develop programs to help other people."[218]
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> We started out as being very serious journalists and people who wouldn't be bought off. And I know that NAHJ has gone through some very tough times financially. I know that. But if you're not true to your principles… If you're going to be bought by what was it… *Fox* [News] *Latino*… Then what are we after all?[219]

A related observation made by informants, and one directly related to the circumstances in which this dissertation was researched and written, is that after more than three decades of existence NAHJ has not demonstrated a sense of history or commitment to its original mission. This observation sometimes emerged even before interviews started. When I initially contacted some of my informants, they were delighted that someone was undertaking a project related to documenting the origins of the organization. The topic also came up during some of the interviews—Gerald Garcia, the first president of NAHJ, recalled visiting the organization's headquarters some years after his term, and none of the staff recognized him or even knew who were the previous leaders of the organization. [220]

Another theme in informant's retelling of their tenure and departure from NAHJ has to do with the effects that their participation had in their personal and

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218. Moran interview.

219. Rivas-Rodriguez interview.

220. Gerald Garcia, Skype interview by Vinicio Sinta, June 21, 2018, Voces Oral History Project, Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas Libraries

professional life. As the first generations of participants in this organization at the twilight of their careers, informants also reflected on how participating in this project allowed them to build a social circle, connect with their community, and become further "assimilated" and "blended" into the field, as per an informant. These perspectives provide clues into individual-level effects of being part of a journalist organization, especially one where membership is based on ethnic identity or affinity.[221]

Lessons from the formation of NAHJ

The formation of NAHJ provides several lessons for journalism studies and Latina/o history. The organization, like NABJ and other groups devoted to increasing the number of members from underrepresented groups in American newsrooms, is an exemplar of a type of institutional actor that has gone largely ignored by media sociology, even among scholars of race/ethnicity and diversity. The narrative of its creation and the context that allowed this specific process, as experienced by its participants, provides a valuable window into how similar organizations came to be.

Wedge issues: NAHJ and identity

As with other organizations of the same type, and journalist unions before that,[222] NAHJ and its members had to balance their "consciousness" as Latinos/as with the pressures of professional norms. After all, the vast majority of the

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221. Through NAHJ, public affairs professional and founder Paula Maes met several people who went on to become some of her closest friends.

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founders, not to mention the rank-and-file members, were working journalists who had not reached management positions. In such a circumstance, conducting oneself as an activist, even on behalf of one's own ethnic identity could be seen as a violation of the norms of objectivity and a threat to credibility. This was even more the case when discussing actions like protests or submitting complaints about coverage or omissions. While this type of activity went on to be more common after NAHJ became consolidated, it was a hard sell to some of the founders.

Then there was the issue of membership and voting rights. As with CCNMA, NAHJ had internal debates about whether only working journalists could be voting members, or whether the organization could look at other categories of membership to accommodate educators, students and even professionals from other media-related fields, like public relations.

Contingencies: NAHJ and civil rights

NAHJ is an analog of pan-ethnic organizations like the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) and the National Council for La Raza (now UnidosUS). These organizations sprang in the late sixties in the middle of the Chicano movement and had deep connections to militant political activism, traces of which can be seen in their names and iconography, as well as in their intersecting professional networks. Much like CCNMA was a regional, Mexican American precursor to NAHJ, MALDEF and the NCLR had their start in the US Southwest as regional organizations designed to improve the political situation of a single national origin group.

As an organization of journalists of color seeking to enact change within the field, NAHJ and its leaders occupy a liminal position. In contrast to civil rights activists and other entities who tried to organize to change media portrayals throughout the 20th century, NAHJ leadership—or at least those with influence over bylaws and the activity agenda—were not complete outsiders to the professional ideology of journalism. Most of them were formally trained in journalism, worked for prestigious publications and broadcasting companies, and were faithful followers of the basic precepts of "objectivity" in reporting. Indeed, as several informants said in their interviews, and in to other paradigmatic arguments for diversity in the media, NAHJ made the case, both in its internal debates and to media companies, that diversity and inclusion are not added value, but a requirement for quality journalism.

Appendix.

Interview Questions.

Background / Race and Civil Rights

- Did everyone get along in the place you grew up in?
- How aware were you of the civil rights movement? How about the Chicano (and/or Puerto Rican) movements?
- Were you political before going into journalism? If so, what caused you to become politicized?

Journalism

- When did you first became interested in journalism and/or publishing?
- (*If studied journalism in college)* How integrated/diverse was your college/program? How many Latinos/as went to your school?
- What newspapers/newscasts/etc. did you read, watch or listen to?
- *(Only for non-journalists)* Did you know any journalists? Interact with them?
- Who were your role models?
- What did you want to do as a journalist? How did you envision yourself?
- How did you feel about the news/journalism in the U.S. back then?
- When did you decide to study journalism? What triggered this decision?
- Did you ever take part in activism (protests, organizing, etc.)?

Early career

- First journalism (or other) job(s)?
- How diverse were these newsrooms? Was diversity an issue considered by leadership in the organization?
- How was labor (assignments, promotions) allocated?

Lead up to the formation of NAHJ

- Were you a member of any journalist organization during your early career?
- Were you aware of any Latino journalist organization, or any other org for journalists of color?
- Were you connected to any informal networks of Latino journalists (or more generally journalists of color)? Did you convene during industry events, etc.?
- What was your relationship with CCNMA?
- How did you learn about the National Hispanic Media Conference?
- (If applicable) How did you become involved in its organization?
- How was the process? Was it easy, difficult…? Who did what? What was your own role in the organization of the conference?
- Can you tell us about the event? What are your recollections from the conference?
- What sparked the interest in a national organization?

Founding process (Committee, etc.)

- How were leaders designated (for the founding process)?
- Who picked the founding committee? And who chose the "choosers"?
- How were you contacted? Why were you chosen for this role?
- What stage of your career where you in at this point?
- How did you combine the time for this with your reporting/editing duties?
- Was your employer supportive?
- How were the founding meetings? Can you describe a typical meeting?
- How did you promote the nascent organization? Who did you address?
- What issues were at stake?
- Which issues were the most contentious?
- What were the issues you personally found most important in designing the organization?
- How did you apply the experience of other organizations like CCNMA or NABJ? Was there any connection?
- How did you envision NAHJ? What were your expectations?

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